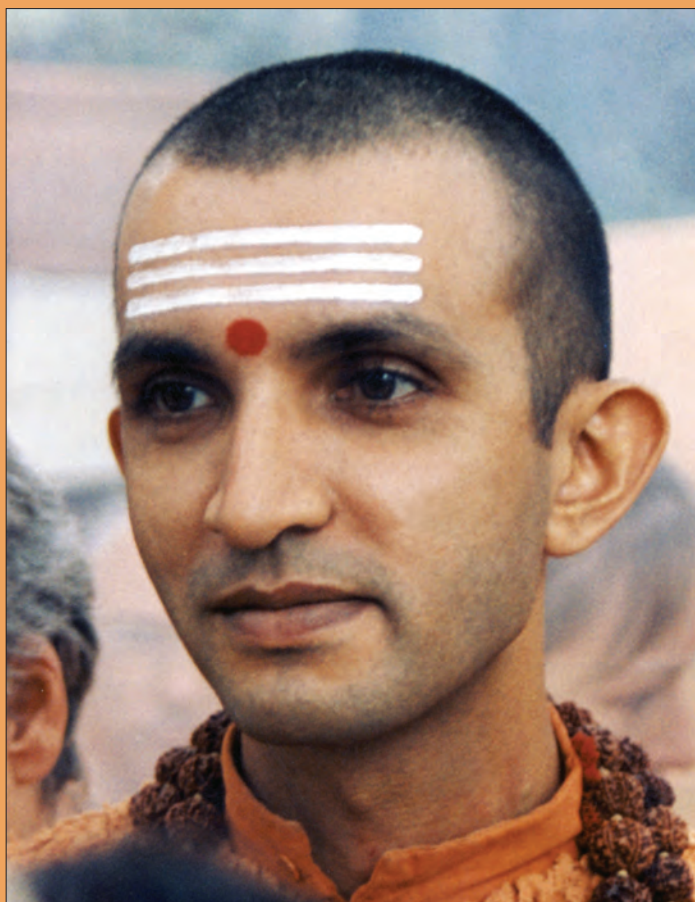


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BIHAR YOGA®

VOLUME TWO

YOGA SADHANA PANORAMA



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

YOGA SADHANA PANORAMA

VOLUME TWO



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VOLUME TWO

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Lectures, satsangs and practices
given in Europe in 1994*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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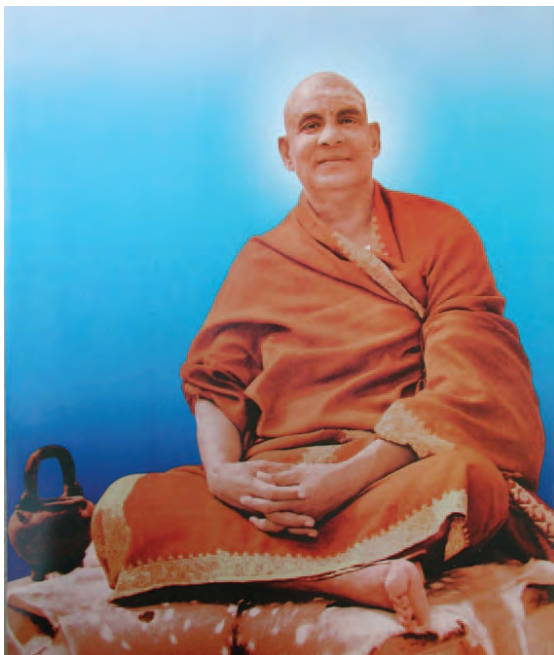
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

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Italy



Opening Speech

I bring you greetings from an ancient spiritual tradition to which I belong and also from the land of Bharat. In English it is translated as India but *Bharat* means a land which is immersed in light. By saying this name I do not mean the present Indian state but the ancient spirituality which has evolved in that part of the world.

If we look at the history of human civilization we find there have been two distinct mentalities. One mentality evolved externally and tries to modify nature, to soothe its needs externally. This civilization is known as the scientific or western civilization. The other mentality has looked inside, and it has tried to understand the nature of human personality, life and human relationships. This discovery of human nature is reflected in the eastern civilizations.

Today, in this present age, there seems to be a need for these two mentalities to come together because the external life is not the ultimate and the inner life is not the final statement. There has to be an integration of both in order to achieve total fulfillment.

Total well-being

There is a story of a family in which only the mother and child lived. The mother had a very intense love for plants. Inside the house there were many different varieties of plants and also there was a beautiful garden with trees, flowers, fruits and shrubs. Her son was really only a little boy, but

he also helped to look after the plants. One day the mother had to go out of town and, knowing she would be away for a few days, she asked him to look after the plants as best he could. The child assured his mother he would definitely look after them and she placed her trust in him and left for her journey.

When she returned a week later she found that most of her plants were looking a bit dull and wilted. She was sad. She called her son and asked, "Did you look after the plants?". Her son said, "Yes mother, I have taken every possible care to see that your plants survived." The mother asked, "How did you look after them?" The child said, "Every morning I would clean all the leaves and flowers and fruits with a cloth. If I saw any insects I would remove them and I have really worked hard. I don't know why they're looking so dull." The mother asked, "Did you give them water?" The son said, "That I forgot."

This story relates to our life because we take care of the external growth but we do not take care of the inner growth. The plant, which is seen in the form of the body, is taken care of in different ways but the roots of the plant, which extend deep into our mind, are hardly seen. The water which has to be given to this plant of life is not pleasure but spiritual awareness. It is this spiritual awareness which sustains life. This is not just my statement, it has been said by saints and seers of all ages, but still this idea has not actually taken root in our lives. For whatever reasons we still find ourselves to be very much involved in external experiences and interactions.

We can even say that the entire system of science has been geared to deal with the external manifestations of our life. However there have been some systems of thought which have emphasized that along with the external manifestations of the trunk, leaves, fruits and flowers, one has to look after and understand the internal manifestations so that the roots which extend under the earth are also taken care of. This is true spirituality; the ability to take care of the seen and the unseen both at the same time.

Human personality

According to the yogic system, the human personality has two dimensions: one which evolves externally and one which evolves internally. The practices of yoga aim at providing experience and also knowledge concerning both human dimensions. Yogis have experienced that when there is an integration of the human faculties, the expressions of life change and there is better fulfillment and satisfaction.

There is a statement that we come from total fulfillment and we go to total fulfillment and the human being is a complete, fulfilled being.

*Om purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate
Purnasya purnamadaya purnameva vashishyate.*

However there are different processes and there are different states of experience. We can say, to make it clear, that we experience, or live in, four distinct dimensions. A human being is guided by the ambitions, by the strengths of character, by the weaknesses of human personality and by the needs which govern our life. Let us look at these four dimensions individually in order to understand the entire yogic process.

First come the necessities in our life. The body has certain needs in order to sustain it, and a clear example is food. Without food, without drink, the body would not be able to sustain itself. In the same way, in our external social life there are certain needs: financial, emotional, intellectual and so on. In order to sustain ourselves and have a sense of satisfaction there has to be fulfillment of these needs.

In order to fulfill these needs we utilize the strength of our character. These strengths represent the qualities which help a human being progress in life. It could be will power or performance of action, it could even be clarity of thought. We constantly utilize these strengths in our daily life. At the same time we are confronted by certain weaknesses of our personality. These weaknesses can be insecurities, fears, mental conflicts, emotional imbalances. The weaknesses can be physical imbalances or psychological problems.

The motivating force behind our performance of action is ambition. This should not be thought of negatively but it should be seen in the form of desire which we wish to fulfill. These are the four areas of life which have to be brought into balance through yoga in order to achieve fulfillment.

I am trying to present to you a very practical approach to yoga. When we are aware of, or are subjected to, the weaknesses then we become aware of the imbalances in our personality. Imbalances in the body create illness and disease. Imbalances in the mind create mental conflicts, anxiety, stress and depression. Imbalances in our mind, when not contained, create deep psychological problems which are called *samskaras* in yoga. *Samskaras* are the unconscious expressions of human personality and, in order to deal with these various weaknesses of the human personality, yoga has devised certain systems of practice, for example the *Hatha Yoga* system and the *Raja Yoga* system.

What has been known all over the world in the form of *asanas* and *pranayamas*, are practices of yoga to achieve physical balance. Of course the body has to be managed properly because, although we take our body for granted, there are certain areas which we have to consider very carefully, for example accumulation of stress in different parts of the body. Stress definitely creates a lot of physical as well as mental imbalance, and when these imbalances are not dealt with immediately they create further problems.

Yoga and health

There is a word in English which is known as disease: 'dis' plus 'ease'. Dis meaning disturbed, ease meaning comfort. When the comfortable, natural state of the body is disturbed then disease is experienced. Although yoga does not claim that it can alleviate or cure diseases or illnesses, it has been found that through regular practices many conditions are helped. Just to give you an example of what is happening in this field of body management, yoga has been recognized in many parts of the world as having great therapeutic potential. In Australia they have done a lot of research in cancer therapy and they

have found that many cases of cancer have been helped through the practices of yoga. In fact the Cancer Research Foundation of Australia has incorporated yoga therapy many times in the management of cancer.

I am not going into details about these researches, but it should be clear that there is potential to manage many different illnesses and diseases which are physical in nature. This is possible through the physical practice of yoga asanas and through the yogic breathing exercises, or pranayama. When the body is harmonized through the practice of asana and pranayama, its systems are brought into balance. It is similar to cleaning the leaves of a plant externally while at the same time we begin to work with our minds internally, and nurture the root of the plant.

In this process the first training which we receive is relaxation. Relaxation is an art. It is not something we can achieve any time, anywhere. Relaxation is a discipline. It is not sleep, because research has shown that even at the time of sleep there can be high levels of stress in the brain and mind. It is quite obvious that when we go to bed we are not alone, we go to bed with our daily problems too. We may sleep but the problems continue to affect the normal states of brain and mind and therefore relaxation is not achieved, or if it is achieved it is never complete and deep. Therefore we say that relaxation is an art which has to be mastered. In order to perfect that art we only have to spend ten minutes every day, during which we are able to let go of the stresses accumulated within ourselves and to develop inner harmony. The mental aspect of yoga, which is comprised of the techniques of *pratyahara*, plays a very vital role in achieving this. Before I explain briefly what *pratyahara* is, I want to tell you about something different – about the meaning of yoga.

People believe that yoga is a spiritual science and those who have studied some literature on yoga say it is a process of controlling the patterns of mind. However, in actual fact, if you study one of the major treatises on yoga, the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, in the very first *sutra* it has been stated that it is a form of discipline. The word which has been used to

describe discipline is a very peculiar one. The word in Sanskrit is *anushasana*. It has been translated as discipline but it does not mean discipline. *Shasan* means to govern, to rule, and *anu* means the subtle aspect, the subtle dimensions. Therefore the meaning of anushasana is governing the subtle aspect of human personality; and this is yoga.

Evolution of personality

Once you can govern the subtle aspects of human personality, you can do anything. So it is here that we have to look into the practices of yoga in relation to how they help the human personality in five stages. The first stage is by giving one the ability to relax. The second stage is by giving one the ability to develop awareness and to observe what is happening. The third is by concentrating or focusing the dissipated forces of personality and mind. The fourth is by attaining realization of the dormant faculties of human personality. The fifth is by utilizing these previously dormant potentials for bettering one's life. Therefore we find that the concept of spirituality in yoga encompasses the body, the mind and the psychic dimensions.

So, when we begin with the practice of relaxation we are releasing barriers and stress created within the mind, and mind is considered to be a very powerful force. Pleasures are experienced in the mind, pain and sorrow is first experienced within the mind, and even the highest spiritual experience is also first experienced within the mind. The mind is the base which has to be properly tuned and therefore yoga lays a very great emphasis on the management of the mind. Not control of the mind but, please remember, management of the mind or mental forces. I do not agree with the expression 'control the mind'. I agree with the statement, 'manage the mind'. With the practice of relaxation we gradually prepare the base of the mind.

The entire spectrum of the mind is seen in yoga in four stages: the intellect, the emotions, the feeling and the psychic dimensions. Intellect is a tool which we always use in life. Emotion is a tool which guides the performance of mind and

the senses in our life. Feeling is a tool which gives us deeper and subtle realizations. Psychic awareness is a tool which brings us closer to the unknown areas of our personality.

In order to manage these areas we have to begin with the simple practices of concentration, for concentration is another area which has to be understood properly. Concentration is an effortless achievement. It is a state of mind in which there is total mental clarity, clarity of perception, clarity of behavior, and these interact. These three things lead to mental concentration and concentration has to be a flowering state of realization, or mind, in which there is absolutely no tension. The word attention suggests to be 'at-tension', and many people confuse concentration with attention, but concentration means relaxed one-pointed awareness. This is achieved in the normal practices of yoga where we learn to focus the mind. When the mind is focused it becomes uni-directional, and then the faculties of mind awaken.

When we turn on the light, the light spreads everywhere but, if by some process we are able to focus the entire light into one point, it becomes a laser beam. It gains strength and potential. As children we used to play around with a magnifying glass, trying to burn pieces of paper or straw. That is a very good example of how the mental energies can be focused to become as powerful as a laser beam. When we are able to increase the focus, the sharpness of our mind like that, the potentials of mind increase, certain changes take place in the human personality. This change happens in the level of human qualities.

Transformation of personality

The qualities which then evolve in life are not restricted to the selfish nature but become more universal. The qualities which we aspire for, those of compassion, love, affection, are not conditioned but become universal. Then the process of realization begins. Yogic realization is knowledge plus perfection plus understanding plus utilization; these are the different aspects of one realization. Realization is not an intellectual concept rather it is a state of transformation of

human nature. It is a state of understanding human nature in which divinity is expressed in the humanness of life and this is the culmination of yoga.

Samadhi generally means union or merger with the divine consciousness. However, I feel that if yoga means unity then it cannot be a self-centered practice. In *samadhi* it is not only the realization of God which is important but also the application of that realization externally. It is a very important aspect which every aspirant must understand; the application of realization. Only when that happens can we say, "Yes, I have completed my journey in life and attained fulfillment."

So, in the management of mind, through concentration we move into states of meditation. When concentration is developed there is a transformation of human qualities and with this transformation there is experience of the meditative state. Now in the meditative state there is a merging of the normal externalized mind with the internal mind. In yogic terminology this internal mind is known as consciousness. Although intellectually we can say that there is very little difference between mind and consciousness, yoga says there is a difference; mind relates to the world of senses, objects, time and space whereas consciousness relates more to the continuity of human understanding and experience. It is this continuity of human experience which makes one aware of higher potentials. This is the evolutionary process of an individual and also of humanity. It is this consciousness which ultimately is realized with the practices of yoga. If we are able to give yoga a chance in our life we shall win.

Please do not relate yoga with me personally. I am a yoga teacher but I am also a *sannyasin*. *Sannyasin* means a person who is dedicated to the cause of spiritual knowledge. *Sannyasa* is my personal affair, it has nothing to do with any of you. Yoga is the affair which relates me with you and you with me. So do not be afraid if you see me in these clothes for they are the clothes of a *sannyasin*. Do not be afraid of yoga either, for yoga is not a philosophy nor a belief nor a dogma nor a religion, rather it is a process of understanding the necessities of life and the management of mind and human potentials.

Of course there are many other aspects of yoga and to perfect all the different yogas is a lifelong process but, as they say, a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. So I hope that I have been able to express my views about yoga and how it can help us in our life. The practice of the physical techniques such as asana help in the management of the body, providing physical balance and harmony. Pranayama, mudras and bandhas are ways to channel the physical forces, giving us the opportunity to deal with the manifest mind. The practices of relaxation and concentration help us deal with imbalances caused by the lack of control over the mental faculties, and the practices of meditation give us the ability to use the human potential. When this is attained a beautiful transformation in life takes place.

Our guru, Paramahansa Satyananda says that life is a flowery mystery and every unfoldment is beautiful. We have to be aware of those unfoldments if we want to see the beauty and enjoy life and therefore it is my request that all of you give yoga a chance in your life. Let us hope that in future we will have more opportunities to meet and discuss other aspects of yoga in greater detail.

Mantra

Today you are being initiated into the process of mantra. *Mantra* means a force which can free the mind from its normal states of identification, and allows a greater creativity and receptivity of the mind to manifest when it is perfected. Mantra is a sound vibration. Sound vibrations can alter the vibratory field of body, brain and mind and the sound vibrations which are known as mantras relate to the different psychic centers or chakras in the human body.

Mantras are a combination of different sounds, consonants and vowels, and with the repetition of a mantra certain change is experienced gradually in the human personality. The first experiences are of mental tranquillity along with relaxation and the focusing of the attention. Then there is a gradual development of concentration whereby sensory perceptions are isolated from their normal attraction to the world of objects and are focused internally. There a new awareness, a new perception, dawns about oneself.

So the meaning of the word mantra is, a force that can liberate the mind from the normal patterns of behavior. Relaxation is the first stage, concentration is the second stage, releasing deep inner stress is the third stage and allowing creativity to manifest is the fourth stage of mantra practice.

There have been many traditions, even in India as well as abroad, which feel that mantras are religious by nature. In actual fact, yoga does not believe this to be true. According to

the practices and principles of Kundalini Yoga, in our body there are different psychic centers. These psychic centers or *chakras* represent a specific manifestation of energy and consciousness. As we develop these different psychic centers we go through altered states of perception.

These altered states of mind or perception are not something to be afraid of. Sleep is an altered state of mind. Pleasure and pain are altered states of mind. An altered state means something which is different from the normal activity of the mind and which dominates the performance of the senses, intellect and emotions. Therefore when we speak of an 'altered state' in yoga, we are speaking of a different state from normal, in which we come to terms with our mind and use the qualities of mind in our daily life. These psychic states are achieved with sound vibrations which affect the brain and also the mind.

Mantra sadhana

In order to practise mantra there are some basic disciplines which we should try to understand and follow. *Sadhana* means regular practice. To use mantra as part of your sadhana there are two basic methods. For the first method you have to find ten minutes of time for yourself, just ten minutes out of the twenty four hours for your own development. Whether it is in the morning or afternoon or evening does not really matter, but those ten minutes belong to you only and not to the world or to the family or to any other person. Neither do they belong to your likes and dislikes, ambitions and desires, but they are dedicated to your own inner harmony and development.

In those ten minutes you first sit down comfortably whether on a chair or on the floor, wherever you are most comfortable. Become aware of the body, close the eyes, and allow the body to become stable, comfortable and relaxed. After you have observed your body, focus your attention in the region of the eyebrow center, allow your mind to rest and focus in the region of the eyebrow center.

When the mind is relaxed, then begin the mantra meditation. It begins with visualizing a symbol in front

of the closed eyes. The symbol is the point on which the mental faculties are focused internally to avoid distractions of mind. To begin with the symbol will not be so clear, it is more a process of imagination. Gradually, with greater focusing of the attention, you will eventually be able to see a shady or hazy form of the symbol, as the concentration develops, that hazy image will become more clear and colorful. When you have the idea or image of a symbol in your mind, then you begin the repetition of mantra mentally. When you repeat the mantra mentally, gradually try and merge your entire attention in the repetition of the mantra. Try not to think, “How soon can I finish so that I can go about my daily business?”. Just merge yourself in the repetition of mantra.

This practice is done for about five to seven minutes every day as part of sadhana and the practice is timed with a mala. A *mala* is usually made of one hundred and eight beads. Traditionally it is held between the ring finger and the thumb while the middle finger gradually moves one bead at a time, synchronized with the breath and mantra. One bead, one breath and one mantra are combined together and this gives the timing. Initially, in order to get used to the practice, do one complete mala of the mantra practice. Later, as you develop a liking for it and become used to the mantra, you can increase the number of malas from one to five or as many as you like. It depends on your own experience and inclination and your sense of comfort with the mantra. This form of practice is done as part of regular sadhana. Is this system clear?

The other method is that you mentally repeat the mantra whenever you want, any time, whether you are sitting or traveling, walking or sleeping, talking or dreaming. Just repeat the mantra for one minute, whenever you have the memory of the mantra. Repeat it when you go about your business, mentally repeat it while you are doing your work. You will find that this way you will gain a lot of self confidence as well as the mental energy to complete and fulfill whatever you are doing. This dynamic mantra meditation realigns the

inner vibratory structure at any time. If you are walking in the park you can adjust the mantra with your steps and breath. Even if it is just for one or two minutes it does not matter, you will derive great benefit from such practice too.

Vibrations and personality

In the course of their studies, the yogis have evolved a different kind of understanding of human personality. We are not here to see who is right and who is wrong, but we are here to experience the subtle dimensions of our personality as the yogis have discovered it.

The yogis realized that the human personality is primarily composed of vibrations. The body along with the mind, and their various expressions, are governed by subtle vibratory forces. About five thousand years ago there was a saint, a yogi, whose name was Kanaad. He was one of the first to talk about the atomic structure of a human being. Just as in the modern age we talk about Einstein as the father of the atomic theory, in spirituality we consider sage Kanaad to be the original propagator of the atomic theory.

In his treatise he has described the exact atomic structure as science has described it today. Of course the names are in Sanskrit but the theories and the experiments are modern and scientific in nature. He explained that the body is composed of atoms and that they are in a state of vibration, and also that the entire elemental structure of the universe is made up of different atoms which are vibrating in their own frequencies. He explained that the density and compression of these different atoms gives birth to different elements.

He has also explained that these atoms, many of them, are physical as well as subtle in nature and the quality of these atoms changes when they become subtle. He named these physical atoms *anu*, and described the subtle atomic formation in the form of *shakti*. Within the atom there is the pulsation of energy, and within the pulsation of energy there is existence of spirit. So, every part of the body and every part of the mind has the inbuilt capacity to realize the spirit. Therefore spiritual experiences are not only mental or

intellectual processes, they are processes in which every part of the body and mind vibrates with spiritual realization.

The five koshas

Well, this is all to bring your attention to one particular point: the subtle energy in our body relates to the chakras which are seen in the psychic body. Yoga recognizes five areas of human manifestation known as koshas. *Kosha* means a form, a shape, a sheath. The physical body which is composed of matter, dense elements, is known as *annamaya kosha*. The mental body composed of the subtle elements is known as the *manomaya kosha*. The dimension of energy governing the body and mind is known as *pranamaya kosha*. The dimension of intuitive knowledge, experiential knowledge and wisdom is known as *vijnanamaya kosha*. And when the entire body experiences joy and bliss, then that is known as *anandamaya kosha*. These five dimensions represent the total human personality.

In the *annamaya kosha*, the dimension of matter, our body is seen and experienced. The functions of the different parts of the body, senses and organs relate to *annamaya*. In *manomaya* we have the usual manifest rationality, feelings, emotions, attitudes and behaviors. In *pranamaya* we have the interaction of energy. In *vijnanamaya* we have the realization of intuitive faculties which represent a new understanding and knowledge of the dimensions which are beyond normal human perceptions. Finally, in *anandamaya* there is a total integration of the human nature, the human experience with the cosmic nature, the cosmic experience.

Tuning the total personality with mantra

All these different states of the human personality can be influenced by vibrations. The physical cells and the mind can be altered by vibrations, and the unknown areas of the mind can be awakened by vibrations.

The external form of this can be experienced in music. We can take music as an example because music creates a definite change in our human personality. There are some forms of music which can stimulate the body, the mind, feelings and

emotions, which can pacify the agitated states of the entire personality. By the word personality, I do not mean the normal personality which we have understood in relation to human psychology. Here, personality has to be understood in the yogic connection which is combining all five dimensions of human experience together – all the five koshas from matter right up to spirit.

The yogis thought, “If vibrations can alter the different states of body and mind, then can there be a process by which we can awaken the dormant faculties through vibrations? Can there be a process by which we can use vibrations to become closer to the inner self?”

In the process of their studies and discoveries they came upon the science of mantra. Just as certain sound frequencies can stimulate or pacify the activities of human personality, in the same way certain guided vibrations can alter the functions of human nature. This understanding gave birth to the science of Kundalini Yoga along with the science of the mantras. *Mantra Yoga* is the science of understanding the effect of vibrations as they influence the human personality. *Kundalini Yoga* is the science of experiencing the altered states of consciousness awakened with the power of mantras.

So we will look at these two aspects. The word *mantra* means liberation of the mental forces by means of a sound vibration. What is more, these mantras are vibrations which we give to ourselves. For example the chanting of om. Now one can relate to om intellectually or religiously just like many other chantings but the actual effect of chanting the mantra om is the experience of awakening the human psyche.

Mantra research

When I was in Barcelona in 1978–79, we conducted a research project in a hospital. In fact that research is one of the important ones in explaining the effect of mantra on the human body and brain. The purpose of the research was to relax people who went to the hospital for surgery. They were put in a room where they chanted om for five minutes

before surgery. Their brain waves, their skin resistance, their heartbeat were monitored scientifically.

The result which came out from this experiment was very interesting. First of all the hyperactivity of the brain was reduced and there was an increase of alpha and delta waves within just five minutes of chanting om. There was also relaxation of the nervous agitations of the body which could be monitored by the blood pressure, by the skin resistance, etc. Subjectively, these patients going in for surgery felt a great reduction in their level of fear. You know when we go to a hospital for surgery there is always anxiety, and fear becomes very predominant. These patients experienced a great reduction of anxiety and fear and there was a greater ability to cope with their disturbed mental states. These results were not anything new. They were the same that yogis had mentioned many many hundreds of years ago.

Mind relates to annamaya and manomaya; psyche to vijñanamaya and anandamaya koshas

So, coming back to the subject of mantras, the yogis said that when a proper combination of the sound vibration is made, the mind and the psyche interact with the body and there is greater harmony. When there is harmony between body, external mind and psyche, it leads to greater states of relaxation and with relaxation there is awakening of the dormant mental potentials.

In states of stress and tension we are unable to use the mental faculties properly. In anxiety there is a great reduction of our normal mental clarity. However with the repetition of mantra there is an increase in mental awareness, alertness and other faculties. It has also been experienced that when the mind is finely tuned, the psychic experiences merge in the mental experiences. Now this is a very important aspect, the merging of mental faculties with psychic faculties.

You may begin to wonder what the difference is between the mental and the psychic faculty. Yoga says that mind is the manifest area of the human personality which interacts with the world of senses, time, space and object. The psychic

dimension of the human personality does not interact with either object, space nor time. It does not interact with the senses. It maintains its own identity and it is in connection with the unknown dimensions of human personality – the anandamaya kosha. So we can say that mind interacts with manomaya kosha and annamaya kosha, whereas the human psyche or the psychic aspect of our nature interacts with vijñanamaya kosha and anandamaya kosha.

Now we will touch on the philosophy of mantra. With the combination of sound vibrations we begin to influence the psyche through the mind. Our mind, which is external, which is manifest, which relates with manomaya and annamaya koshas, experiences desire and action, pleasure and sorrow. Action is the result of desire, and then pain and pleasure are the pair of opposite forces. With repetition of mantra harmony of mind is experienced where it does not fluctuate between these pairs. It is when the mental fluctuations reduce, and eventually stop, that we pass the mind and enter the psyche. So, the immediate results of mantra practice are seen in the form of relaxation and an increase of one-pointedness. One-pointedness means focusing energy in a uni-directional manifestation of human effort and creativity. This process leads to the realization of the psyche.

Chakra awakening

This realization of the psyche begins with the awakening of the chakras and *kundalini* which is the effect of Kundalini Yoga. In the yogic view of the human personality the different levels of experience are described in the form of chakras, where the energy manifests in a certain form. Consciousness also manifests in a corresponding form giving birth to a specific quality of creativity.

Creativity is a very broad term and within creativity there are different areas where one can excel. In each level of creativity there is a different unfoldment of consciousness. Ultimately we go through seven stages of transformation within our personality and these have been related to the seven chakras from *mooladhara* to *sahasrara*. In mantra

meditation there are different systems of practice which can lead one to that depth and awareness, from mind into psyche. We shall look at the various stages of the mantra meditations.

First of all, in order to influence the physical states of the body, the mantra is to be practised verbally. For example, one can sit down and repeat the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya*, or one can even sing it in the form of a *kirtan*, or it can be played on a tape recorder so that the entire body is subjected to the effect of the sound vibrations. To influence the different mental states, it has to be done mentally. It is natural that when we begin to repeat the mantra mentally with introversion of mind we experience drowsiness, lethargy and sleep because we are not used to states of introversion in our normal life. When we feel that we have become introverted, and that lethargy is taking over the mental state of alertness, we should begin to repeat the mantra by whispering it.

In order to make the mantra part of daily activity you can even repeat it while performing any duty which does not involve concentration. Do not try to practise your mantra while driving the car. You have to be more with yourself, not only to practise mantra but also to experience the mental state given to you by that mantra at a particular moment.

Once you have perfected the mantra to this level, in order to go deeper into your personality, you can combine mantra with different symbols or *yantras* or *mandalas*, or other meditative techniques such as *trataka*. In *trataka*, mantra combined with the techniques of *pratyahara* and *dharana* becomes a very powerful, stimulating tool for the psyche. A lot can be said about it because it is a complete practical theory in itself but in brief it should be understood that the use of mantra is to ultimately realize the human potential contained in the various chakras.

When these centers of energy and consciousness become active in our life, life changes from normal to supernormal. That is the state of superbeing as it is described by Sri Aurobindo. So, for the yogis, Superman does not exist only in comics, it is a reality.

Meditation

In the yogic system, meditation is not achieved instantaneously, rather there is a gradual process of withdrawing the mind and in Raja Yoga this has been explained in the form of three stages of meditation. The first stage of meditation is known as *pratyahara* which means feeding the inner senses, and it has also been translated as withdrawing the senses. The second stage is known as *dharana*, which means fixation of the awareness on one point. The third stage is known as *dhyana*, which has been translated as the meditative state, but it literally means fusion of the mind with the object of contemplation.

It is in this context that we have to understand the meditative process. It has to be understood that one cannot try to bypass the mind; also it cannot be done, because we lack the basic training and the mental discipline. Initially we have to practise *pratyahara* where we gradually train the mind to recognize itself. The mind has to recognize its activities and manifestations.

Pratyahara

A very apt description of *pratyahara* is that it is like a turtle withdrawing its limbs into its shell. How many limbs does a turtle withdraw into its shell? Two arms, two legs, one tail and one head. The two arms, the two legs and the tail represent the five senses, and the head represents the mind, the mental activity.

The senses, by nature, are attracted to objects from which they derive pleasure, and the mind fluctuates from one object to the next. There are two tendencies of mind; that of attraction and that of repulsion. When there is attraction there is a feeling of pleasure and when there is repulsion there is a feeling of disconnection or pain. In order to gain the ability to withdraw our senses from external objects there has to be an understanding of the nature of the objects to which the senses are attracted. So before any kind of withdrawal there has to be an extension of the mental faculties.

The extension of the mental faculties is the first stage of *pratyahara* – extending the mind to recognize the sounds, skin sensations, smells and tastes. Once there is an awareness of the environment to which we are normally attracted, we gradually begin to isolate ourselves from these sense objects, and we begin to focus ourselves internally at one point.

Dharana

Focusing of attention at one point takes place in three different levels: the space of the head, the space of the heart, and the space at the mooladhara region. Initially we concentrate on the space of the head. Normally the faculties of the head are dominant and it is that area which we have to be aware of first, and control. After the head activity and the head space has been harmonized and balanced, we move onto the heart space. In *dharana* the senses have been isolated from their external attractions and objects and are focused into one experience. There are many practices which can take one from the superficial or the preliminary techniques of concentration to deeper levels of concentration.

Once there is total harmony in the head space and in the heart space, when we have been able to channel the force of the intellect and the force of emotion, then we deal with the force of instinct. You know there are four basic instincts which have to be channelled: *ahara* meaning craving for satisfaction; *maithuna*, or the sexual instinct; *bhaya*, fear of the unknown, and *nidra*, isolation from the senses and the mind. *Nidra*

literally means sleep, and what happens when we sleep? There is disconnection of the mind from the senses and the external world. When that disconnection takes place, the quality of mental experience changes. These four instinctive forces have to be channeled in the stage of dharana, and then when these are channeled we move on to meditation.

Dhyana

Meditation is not a practice, rather it is a state of mind where there is a merging of the experiencer, the experience and the process of experiencing. It is at this stage that meditation actually becomes a living experience of human consciousness. I am using the words, “living experience of human consciousness” for a definite reason. It is easy to have an intellectual concept, to experiment with certain things and to evolve an understanding of them, but it is an art to be in one continuous state of harmony, conscious harmony.

There are three things here: philosophy, science and yoga. Science is something that you can experiment with and so come to an understanding. Philosophy is an idea which you like or enjoy, but you can never understand it fully. Yoga is the combination of both. It is this yoga which we have to understand through meditation. In yoga we understand the application of higher realizations in our daily life. This must be achieved in meditation, otherwise it is not meditation, it is a mental fantasy which can take any shape, form or dimension. Still, in order to experience the purity of the self, the purity of consciousness, one has to go through the mind.

We have to understand the importance of effort in the practices of pratyahara and dharana. As far as my understanding goes, yoga here does not aim for experience, rather it aims for effort. Take hunger for example. You have food in front of you. How are you going to satisfy your hunger? By feeding yourself. When the hunger is satisfied, that is the experience, but the effort, the movement which you have made to pick up the food, to put it in the mouth, chew it and swallow it – that is the process of yoga.

So the effort which we make in order to go deeper into our own being is the effort of pratyahara and dharana, and the total fulfillment is experienced in dhyana. I feel that it is necessary that every individual practises these various stages in their day-to-day life and in order to do this it is necessary that we keep some time for ourselves. I am sure that we can all afford ten to fifteen minutes of the twenty four hours and can dedicate these minutes for our development.

Self discovery

One has to begin with something very simple and basic so these practices become a process of self discovery. Begin with the body. Begin with understanding the different states of the senses, the different sensory experiences and sensory interaction between the body and the brain. This will bring an increased degree of awareness into your own perceptions. In the course of time, when you are aware of the different activities and interactions in the body, the attention will automatically divert itself to the experience of mind.

How do we deal with mind? First by observing the sensory activity within the mind, then by withdrawing our thought patterns, then by understanding the emotional patterns, then by understanding the subconscious and the unconscious manifestations. Then we move into the psychic dimension. I am sure you will be very successful if you follow this simple system. You know it is no use digging twenty holes one foot deep with the hope of finding water. It is better to dig one hole twenty feet deep.

Tonight, let us take the first step. When you go to bed tonight and for the following month, just try one practice. Lie on your bed, you don't even have to sit up. Just be comfortable, and observe mentally the entire activity of the day starting from the time you woke up till the time you went to bed. See the day in the form of a movie in your mind and know that, "From moment to moment I have performed this activity." In this process you will come across many things which you have missed in normal life; attitudes in behaviors and speech. Find out where you have excelled yourself and where you have

made certain mistakes. Say to yourself, “Tomorrow I will try not to make these mistakes.”

Within a month your entire perception will change and you will be very aware and creative. This will be the first step in the meditative process. Whenever you come to the *ashram* you can practise the other meditations as you have been taught. Just keep at it until you are able to perfect yourself in one practice and go through a process of inner purification. In this process you will come across yourself. It will be a process of self discovery and when you have discovered yourself, nothing else remains to be known. So we will leave everything to God and see when our paths cross again.

Mind Management

I bring you greetings from the traditions of yoga and sannyasa. Sannyasa is a way of life, and yoga is a method of experiencing the higher qualities of life. We shall try to discover the different aspects of yoga as it relates to human life.

People have defined yoga in many different ways but there has been one statement by our guru Paramahansa Satyananda in which he has defined yoga as the gift of peace for humanity. I feel this statement to be the most appropriate description of yoga, not because he is my guru but because I see the logic of the statement, because peace is something which we definitely desire and need in our life. In fact we are all searching for peace. In our own ways we are making different efforts to experience the state of peace and harmony in our life but we come across certain problems in this search. We do not know the reason for disturbance in our own life and therefore we cannot discover how to attain peace.

Peace and harmony are states of mind and there are many factors which can disturb the equilibrium of mind. Without dealing with the disturbed states of mind we are trying to find a method to attain peace externally and this is where yoga comes in with definite concepts about the human personality. Yoga says that instead of isolating ourselves from the mind we should try to discover the reason for imbalance within ourselves. The moment you are able to discover the reason for the imbalance within you, you will

find peace very easily. With this idea in mind yoga evolved the different practices of Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Karma Yoga, etc.

Power of mind

Mind is recognized as the main factor governing our entire life. In fact we can even say that the ground of life, the basis of life, is the mind and the body extends externally from this ground of mind in the manifest dimension. The experience of manifest nature, the knowledge, the use and the understanding of the manifest world is the superficial extension of the mind. The world of name, form and idea is the external manifestation of the mind. The world of senses and objects is the external experience and manifestation of mind. The world of spirit, of psychic experiences and knowledge is the internal manifestation of mind.

So, in the yogic tradition mind has been given a place of high importance and all the practices of yoga evolve around managing the mind. One of the main text books of yoga known in the West is the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, and to create a background for our discussion I must explain to you some of the basic principles of yoga. Like a musician who comes on stage and first goes through the process of tuning the instruments rather than starting to play immediately, so you must understand the basics of yoga before we go into the theme of yoga and meditation so that you can eventually realize it yourself.

Those who have studied the *Yoga Sutras* are familiar with the first few statements in it. The second sutra is usually the one which comes to mind, “Control of the mental patterns is yoga”. That is what people generally refer to as their understanding of yoga, but there is another statement before this which is of the utmost importance: “Yoga is a form of discipline”. Here, Sage Patanjali has brought our attention to the aspect of discipline, not only mental or internal discipline but also physical, social, external. He says it is as the result of this acquired discipline that it becomes possible to control the modifications of the mind, and then comes

the third statement, “After this it becomes possible to realize the inner nature”.

These three statements are of utmost importance in the yogic system. In fact all the systems of Hatha and Raja Yoga, and the other systems of yoga revolve around these three statements. We can come to a conclusion that first of all yoga is a form of discipline which we must try to develop in our lives. The second conclusion we can derive is that we have to learn how to manage our mental expressions and experiences. So, keeping these ideas in mind we are going to begin with our discovery of yoga.

Self-discipline

Self discipline – what does it mean? One has to look at it from different angles, the physical, the psychological and the spiritual. Of course discipline is not the correct word to describe what Sage Patanjali initially thought. The Sanskrit word which he originally used was *anushasana* which means to govern the different expressions of human personality. This governance of the body, the mind and the psyche is known as yogic discipline.

Definitely discipline does not mean a self imposed daily routine. Governance of body and mind begin with making the effort to harmonize the various functions of body and mind. This governance, or discipline, begins with something external with which we identify every moment – our body. We continuously and constantly identify with our body as the main tool of our expression in the manifest dimension. All the activities and interactions take place through the senses and the body but we do not take proper care of our body.

For example, we purchase a car and after driving a certain number of kilometers we have to take it for servicing, and we do this regularly. Your body is like a car. Since the time of your birth till today, how many times have you taken it for servicing? Any idea? Maybe none. Maybe no times at all! We have, in this way, created a great imbalance in our physical systems and because of this we experience different illnesses and diseases which represent malfunction of our physical

structure, lack of service to our physical structure. In order to provide the servicing, yoga comes with the practices of asana and pranayama, first trying to harmonize the physical, external activities of the body.

Hatha Yoga and physical harmony

I do not have to go into detail about the practice of asana and pranayama because that is known to everyone, but apart from them there is another system of yoga which is as important as them and is designed to harmonize the body. These are the six Hatha Yoga practices for purification, the *shatkarmas*. Of course I realize that in many places there is resistance to the practise of shatkarmas because we are not used to the difficult practices of yoga which lead to self purification. Nevertheless, in my opinion, they are more important than the practices of asana and pranayama. In brief these six practices are: *neti*, cleaning of the nasal passage; *dhauti*, cleaning of the upper digestive tract; *basti*, cleaning of the lower digestive tract; *nauli*, activation of the pranic centers in our physical structure, *kapalbhati*, purification and stimulation of the brain and *trataka*, focusing the mind by isolating it from the world of the senses.

Now in these six practices of Hatha Yoga we find that there are three physical practices: *neti*, *dhauti* and *basti*. *Nauli* is a pranic practice, *trataka* is a technique of concentration and the final one, *kapalbhati*, is a technique for cerebral stimulation. So these six practices aim at harmonizing the subtle functions of the physical structure. Combined with the practice of asana and pranayama they all become a very powerful system for inner harmony.

The aim of yoga is meditation, but yoga has not isolated the meditative process from the body. Yoga does not say that the meditative state is of the mind alone. Yoga says that the meditative state is a state of body as well as mind, and that asana, pranayama and shatkarma lead to the physical meditative state. In this context meditation means awakening and using the natural faculties of body, mind and spirit. After the practice of asana, pranayama and shatkarma,

when we have been able to regulate the physical activities and harmonize the functions of our inner body, the effect of physical harmony and balance influences the mental behavior. Then we begin with the practices of concentration which specifically deal with mind.

Raja Yoga and mental harmony

Mind has been viewed in two parts by the yogis. The manifest mind is known as *ashuddha*, the impure mind. Why is it impure? Because of its distractions in the world of senses and objects. Due to these distractions the mind does not have the ability to naturally express its qualities and therefore experiences stress. Thoughts remain unclear. There is no clear direction for our actions and motivations. We are influenced by attractions and dislikes and we are aware of the surface currents which disturb our entire life process.

The *shuddha* or pure mind is the second half which is the developed, harmonized, concentrated mind. This pure mind relates more to the spiritual dimension and its interaction with the external world. In order to give you experience of the inner mind and the ability to harmonize the external mind so that you are free from the different influences and stresses of life, yoga speaks of the techniques of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana.

I have mentioned that the aim of yoga is meditation; what is meditation? Meditation is realization of mind, but not mind as an independent unit, rather mind as part of the physical structure and the spiritual dimension. This should be understood carefully. Most of the time, mind is relating to the external world and when we try to become aware of the inner dimension it takes a lot of effort from our side, and so we encounter certain states which we are not able to understand rationally.

However it is not just a question of understanding the mental states in meditation. We have to make the effort to bring that higher realization into our daily activity. That realization then manifests in the form of refined qualities, refined behavior and interaction with the world, and a deep

understanding. When we have these things in our life, and we are experiencing them, then that state is similar to the state of realization. This spiritual realization is the system of Vedanta where one does not only relate to a state of experience intellectually but one lives it.

Please remember that it is not necessary for every teacher to have actually experienced that spiritual realization. A professor who teaches atomic theory in the university does not necessarily have the experience of the atomic systems. You have to experiment yourself in order to have that realization of atomic principles. In the same way, with yoga or meditation, it is necessary that you make the effort to realize that inner experience.

The systems of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana enable one to come to that level of understanding, and to realize and apply that experience in normal life. Pratyahara is a method by which we begin to gradually observe the activities of the mind in relation to the external world. We learn how to avoid the stresses and tensions which effect the sensitivity of our personality and nature. After we have come to this point of managing the external interactions of mind we move into the practices of dharana. Dharana means gaining the ability to focus our attention at one point without distractions. After we have attained perfection in this state of meditation we move into dhyana. In dhyana we begin to change the nature and the quality of the mind. Once the nature and quality of the mind changes then its manifestations in the external life becomes different.

Then comes samadhi which means total inner harmony and union with the inner self so that the external nature and the internal nature are in harmony with each other.

The Five Dimensions

Annamaya kosha

Yoga says that the human personality has five aspects which are called koshas or dimensions. The first is annamaya kosha. This is the dimension in which a human being performs and interacts in daily life. We perform and interact with the senses, with the external world, with name, form and idea. The physical body is the medium or tool through which we are able to function optimally with the external world. Annamaya has also been translated as the dimension of matter of which the body is a part. Initially it is the annamaya kosha which has to be harmonized.

If we look at our body from the perspective of human anatomy and physiology we find that there are many systems in it which perform assigned actions in order to sustain life. The respiratory system performs its actions, in the absence of which we would not survive. The cardiovascular system also has its own functions, which are equally necessary for our survival.

Like this there are many different systems of the body, each of which has a specific function necessary for life. According to the yogic physiology and anatomy, all these different systems form part of the annamaya kosha along with the experiences of the senses and the performance of activity by the brain. So initially when we begin with our yoga practices it is the annamaya kosha which we try to harmonize and please remember that it is the physical harmony which leads to a complete meditative state.

In the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali the best physical state has been described in relation to the performance of asana. It is said in the definition of asana that the body posture should be comfortable, still and at total ease. When the body is in a perfectly comfortable state then there is a sensation of pleasure emanating from the body and affecting the brain. Now if this is supposed to be the optimal state of the body, of the annamaya kosha, then let us compare it with the normal state of our physical structure – pain in the joints, pain in the lower back, stiffness of the shoulders and neck, lack of circulation in various parts of the body. Of course these states do not represent the balanced state of annamaya kosha, so how do we come to the state where there is comfort and where pleasure is experienced by the body?

People say that the practice of physical postures leads to this state of harmony in the physical body but actually this concept is somewhat wrong. We practise asana with the understanding that it will create physical harmony and remove imbalances of the physical structure, but in some way we have missed a very basic point.

Pawanmuktasana

The practice of asana begins with the practise of a very simple series of physical movements which are known as pawanmuktasana. If I have to teach anyone yoga, I make them practise the pawanmuktasana series for a minimum period of one year before moving on to other asana. That is why I get very few yoga students and people call me only for lectures, not for teaching. Still, I feel, from a practical understanding of the yogic system, that these techniques of pawanmuktasana are of utmost importance because with this practice we actually meditate on each and every joint and part of the body.

The performance of asana should not become a practice of movement where we tend to lose awareness of the body and identify with the pleasures of the body. Normally we tend to involve ourselves in the pleasures generated by the

posture. We tend to identify with the movement that is being performed during asana practice, but movement is a very superficial aspect of the asana. Creating a meditative state is the real aim of asana. Therefore I personally feel that pawanmuktasana has to be the most important group of postures in yoga.

In pawanmuktasana we identify with each and every joint, each and every muscle and part of the body. You know a lot of research is being done, especially with plants, to see how they grow if you give them proper care and enough attention. Why can't we apply the same principle with our big toe? Why can't we give proper care and attention to our big toe so that the pranic flow in the big toe becomes active? When that happens the entire cellular structure of the big toe will undergo a transformation. You can try it with your right toe and compare it with your left toe after three months. Maybe you will see that your right toe is bigger and fatter than the left one!

Awareness, relaxation and activation of the energy in the body is what we try to attain with the practice of postures. When the mind merges with the body, and they fuse into one entity, then that is known as enlightenment of the body. I am telling you this because this is the progression in yoga, it is not necessary that you do it today or tomorrow. I am trying to make it clear that one cannot isolate the body from the mind nor the mind from the body in the practice of yoga.

Not only the awareness of the external parts, but also the awareness of the internal systems has to develop. These internal systems are in stress and tension because of misuse and overuse, and this internal activity has to be regulated. Before this session you were practising yoga nidra where one aspect of the practice was rotating the awareness from one part of the body to the next. That is just an example of how we have to train our mind to interact with the body.

So, when we try to balance our annamaya kosha we are actually educating the mind, training the mind to realize the potential of the physical body. And after annamaya kosha

comes manomaya kosha. Of course traditionally pranamaya kosha comes in between, but we shall discuss that later.

Manomaya kosha

Manomaya kosha is the dimension of mental experience and interaction with the self and the external environment. This manomaya kosha is a very important and mysterious aspect of the human personality. How do we know what mind is? How do we know? How does the mind interact? What is the behavior of our mind and what is the quality of our gunas, those natural qualities with which we come into this world? We will discuss the gunas later. First let us deal with the aspect of mind. Yoga says that mind which is manifest has four specific aspects, and these are known as manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara.

Manas is the aspect of mind which is involved in contemplation of the experiences of the sensory perception. For example sound is there, we may accept it or we may not accept it; heat and cold are there, we may enjoy it or not enjoy it. This involvement of the mind with the sense organs, the sense perception and the external environment is the attribute of manas.

The second aspect is *buddhi*, the intellect. Buddhi is the rational understanding of human nature. When we try to see the concept of right and wrong, of the just and the unjust, this is an aspect of buddhi. Rationality, understanding, acceptance and rejection are the four attributes of buddhi.

The third aspect is *chitta* which receives impressions of the present experience and stores it for future use in the form of memory, in the form of subconscious understanding or in the form of knowledge. The fourth aspect is *ahamkara*, the ego factor which identifies the self with the environment in which we live.

Besides these four aspects of manomaya kosha we also have feelings or emotions, and all these faculties and activities of manomaya have to be channelized. Normally there are too many distractions which do not allow us to focus in one experience for long. It is not anybody's fault.

It is the nature of the mind to jump from one thing to the next without allowing you the time to assimilate it. When the mind and the attention are jumping from one thing to the next, subconscious and unconscious psychological stress is created. One can deal with external stress, but to deal with subconscious and unconscious stress is very difficult. Yoga deals with this aspect of human personality by first of all creating a state of relaxation within the mind.

Before relaxation can take place there has to be an awareness of what is happening around us. If we have to close the doors and windows of the room we have to actually use our legs and hands, go there and make that physical effort to close the doors and the windows. In the same way, in relation to the mind we also have to go through a process of first becoming aware of what is happening around us. We have to identify what is necessary and what is unnecessary, isolating the negative reactions from the normal experiences so that there are less distractions within the mind. Then we learn how to focus the mind in one experience or state. This process is known as pratyahara.

Pratyahara

Pratyahara is the beginning of the training in how to deal with the human mind. First of all in the practice of pratyahara we are taught to extend our awareness outside, just as in the practices of pawanmuktasana we are taught to extend the awareness to the different parts of the body, to know that they exist. You can try an experiment. Go and see someone who does not practice yoga and ask one question. The question is, how many times a day do you become aware of your feet or toes? If there is pain or suffering then of course there will be awareness of the pain in the feet, otherwise you will find very few people who are aware of them. I have asked many people this question and very few really know the feet exist.

Just as in pawanmuktasana we become aware of the extremities of the body, in pratyahara we become aware of the extensions of the mind into the outer world. After you

have been able to fully extend your senses and your awareness externally, then the process of gradually withdrawing them and focusing them inside begins. Meditation is not just stopping the external influences from affecting your mind, and meditation is not just a process in which we become aware of the mind. Meditation is when we add the quality of awareness to every process and activity.

So, with the practice of pratyahara which evolves into dharana we re-educate the mind to become aware of itself and this is a very important aspect of education which we have never yet received in our lives. Social education is job-orientated whereas the yogic system of education gives self awareness. This is not a selfish attitude towards one's self, rather it is knowing the qualities one has, and using those qualities in life. With that comes awareness of your own performance and reactions in life, and learning how to harmonize them.

I often find it difficult to accept that people who have meditated for many years and trained intensely cannot control their own reactions and negativity. What these people are trying to achieve in meditation is something I have never been able to figure out. Where is the self awareness and the realization of our qualities and nature? There has to be a creative, positive and supportive system which applies in the practice of meditation and in life too.

Pranamaya kosha

Once we have been able to manage the normal activities of the mind, the thoughts, feelings and emotions, and we are able to understand our rationality, then we begin to deal with pranamaya kosha or the dimension of energy. The name is pranamaya, the dimension filled with prana. The question naturally comes; what is prana? Generally it has been translated as energy. *Prana* has also been defined as the force which governs the manifest dimension, or the life process. Yoga defines two qualities of prana. In one aspect prana governs the activities, the functions of body and mind. In the other aspect prana manages the cosmos, the universe.

We have to understand prana from a different perspective in order to relate it to our life. Prana is the quality of elements. What is the quality of *agni tattwa* – the fire element? Heat. What is the quality of *jal tattwa* – the water element? Fluidity. What is the quality of *prithvi tattwa* – the earth element? Its supportive nature. What is the quality of *vayu tattwa* – the air element? Its sustaining nature. What is the quality of *akasha tattwa* – the space or sky element? It provides the right atmosphere for growth. There is a very beautiful statement in the *Vedas* which is *Kham Brahman* meaning space is higher consciousness. It is this space which has been recognized as the ultimate *maha prana*.

So, each of the five elements has a particular quality, attribute and function. In the body we experience heat which is the quality of *agni tattwa*, the fire element. Our body is more than 80% liquid, that is the *jal tattwa* or water element. The fusion of elements in different degrees gives rise to new life forms. These elements, along with their qualities, support the life forms, and their inherent quality is known as prana. Prana is known by the yogis to exist in animate beings and also in inanimate beings.

Prana can have different colors and just as you mix two colors to create a third color, so two elements can create a third force of prana. You can imagine how many different types of pranas we have, with their combination of the five elements and also their individual pranic energy. The manifestation of these pranic forces are seen in Kundalini Yoga in the chakras which we will discuss later in detail.

Harmonizing gross prana with pranayama; subtle prana with dharana

In brief, prana is the factor which can either elevate the mind and consciousness and raise the energy, or bind one to a physical state of experience and to confines from which there is no escape, confines we experience in the form of different mentalities.

According to yoga, the pranic system is harmonized with the practices of pranayama and dharana. When we practise

pranayama we are purifying, stimulating and awakening the physical pranic energy, but when we come to the state of dharana after practising pratyahara, then we deal with the energy contained in the tattwas. This management of the pranic kosha through dharana has not been described in the western countries so far, although an attempt has been made in the book *Dharana Darshan*, published by Yoga Publications Trust.

One must understand that this prana is gross and subtle at the same time. Even in the practices of Hatha Yoga an attempt is made to harmonize the gross and the subtle prana in the form of pingala and ida. *Pingala* is the solar aspect, the dynamic aspect. The second aspect, *ida* is the lunar aspect, the passive force. The ida and pingala forces also represent the channels or the flows of vital energy in our body. In order to activate these two flows in the body, mantras are used, apart from the practices of pranayama. So let us look in brief at the techniques which awaken the solar and lunar forces in our bodies.

Pranayama

The solar force represents the vital aspect of prana which controls and regulates the functions of the physical body. The lunar aspect represents the passive force which controls the functions of the mind. In the practices of pranayama we try initially to regulate the flow of breath, and through breath we eventually alter the flow of pranic energy in our system. There are different kinds of pranayama but we can divide them into three main groups: the vitalizing, the tranquilizing and the harmonizing.

Vitalizing pranayama create or generate intense heat in the pranic activity of the body. Some researchers have shown that those people who are feeling physically dull can be activated by the vitalizing pranayama. I had the opportunity to teach vitalizing pranayama in a mental hospital to people who were catatonic. That is, to people who you can put in one position and they stay there for a long time. For example, if their arm is up, it will remain up until you actually, forcibly bring it down. It is a depressive

nervous state in which there is absolutely no control over the functions of the nervous system, no control over the muscular system, nor any interaction taking place between the brain and various parts of the body. The commands are not recognized by the body, and the body does not send any stimulation to the brain. When I taught these people pranayama I actually had to close one of their nostrils in order to make them breathe through the other.

One of the first practices that we did was activation of pingala nadi, breathing in and out only through the right nostril, by blocking the left nostril with cotton or wax. We found that after a few days of practise they began to respond to instructions which were being given to them and became more active. Once they began to respond we incorporated many other pranayamas into their system. The end result of the practice was that they were eventually able to look after their own needs, relate to the instructions that were being given to them and also recognize the situations and the environment of the external world. So, we found that practices which vitalize the pranic system in the body are beneficial in externalizing the mental activity.

Similarly, when people who are hyperactive, who are prone to chronic stress and tension, practise the tranquilizing pranayama, it helps them to quieten and relax their nervous agitation. Of course to feel their real effects a level of perfection has to be reached, but according to yoga, these different influences on the body and the brain happen because of the solar aspect and the lunar aspect of prana, and in order to be efficient in life it is necessary to harmonize the interaction between the brain and the body by practising harmonizing pranayama.

Prana and mantra

In Hatha Yoga we also use mantras to stimulate the pranas, and the system is similar to that of Kundalini Yoga. The yogis have come to realize that each flow of energy, or channel of prana, is governed by a specific vibratory force, and in the practice of Hatha Yoga the pingala, solar force and the ida,

lunar force, are governed by two mantras. These mantras are *hum*, governing the solar and *thum* governing the lunar. In fact the word *hatha* is the combination of these two mantras, so from the name itself it can be seen clearly that the purpose of *Hatha Yoga* is to balance the pranas which are manifesting in the body and in the mind.

When we go deeper into the regulation of the pranic force in our body, we have to deal with kundalini practices. In Kundalini Yoga it is stated that within the body there are six main psychic centers. Five centers, from mooladhara to vishuddhi, relate to the individual senses and elements. Mooladhara relates to the earth element, swadhisthana to the water element, manipura to the fire element, anahata to the air element and vishuddhi to the space element. All the five chakras relate to different sense organs and sensory perceptions: touch, smell, sight, hearing, taste. The sixth chakra is ajna chakra, the individual mind, the cognitive force of the manifest dimension.

Of course people also include sahasrara in the system of chakras but sahasrara is not a chakra which undergoes awakening or transformation. Rather it is the perennial state of an awakened being, where one controls all the faculties of the individual mind and one also experiences the state of paranormal consciousness. I am using the word paranormal here because the state of sahasrara is. It cannot be defined by words. It is the state of inner effulgence or enlightenment.

So the six chakras are the most important ones and these chakras are activated by *bija mantras*. There is a group of practices in Kundalini Yoga which are known as *chakra shuddhi*. These practices are to purify the psychic centers and the pranic energy contained within them. In yoga we utilize the bija mantras of each chakra to activate the pranas.

Dharana and consciousness

In pranamaya kosha there is another aspect, and that is of consciousness. Each aspect of prana has been linked with a definite state of consciousness and one of the instincts. In order to awaken one's dormant potentials in the form of

kundalini, yoga states that it is necessary to control these instincts. For example, manipura is governed by the instinct of craving for satisfaction and fulfillment which is known as *ahara*. It is necessary to sustain the individual personality. Just like food sustains the physical body, feelings sustain the mental body. From good food we derive enjoyment and pleasure, from good feelings we also derive enjoyment and pleasure, and we nurture ourselves.

The instinct of sleep governs anahata chakra. Here sleep is not to be understood in the same context as normal sleep. Sleep, or *nidra*, here means the absence of a solid base, which leads to the disconnection of the senses from the outer environment. Through the eyes we are aware of the quality of vision. When we close our eyes the external vision is not active, there is disconnection of the visual sense from the world of senses and objects. We hear through the ears. If we plug our ears and do not hear any outside sound, that is known as disconnection from the world of sound. These different disconnections lead to isolation of the mind from the world of senses and objects, and this isolation is known as *nidra*. It has been defined as an instinct also because when the mind is overloaded with sensory inputs there is a natural and instinctive tendency for it to withdraw itself from the outside world. This withdrawal is experienced as deep introversion which physically manifests as sleep. So these are examples of the instincts which we try to overcome in the process of the awakening of pranamaya kosha.

Vishuddhi is governed by ego centered awareness. Ego which relates identity to the external world. The identification with the world of name, form and idea is known as ego identification. In the practices of Kundalini Yoga we have to work at different levels simultaneously. Awakening of the pranas in the different chakras is one aspect, managing and sublimating the instincts is the second aspect and experiencing the altered states of consciousness which are associated with each chakra is the third aspect. With the opening of the different chakras, the balanced energy, the universal energy which flows in our body is known as kundalini

shakti. This kundalini is an aspect of the maha prana, cosmic energy manifesting in an individual body; an unlimited force in a limited physical, individual structure.

Vijnanamaya kosha

With the awakening of pranamaya kosha we move on to vijnanamaya kosha. Psychic has been used as the word to describe vijnanamaya kosha, but it also means the subtle understanding, and not just knowledge but wisdom. Knowledge can be an intellectual process, a rational process, but wisdom is the living application of that knowledge and in this we become aware of the different dimensions of consciousness.

The practices of dhyana meditation are applied to experience the vijnanamaya kosha, and this eventually leads to the experiences of anandamaya kosha, the bliss. Anandamaya is not only bliss, it is also beauty combined. Bliss and beauty, these are the two qualities which a spiritual aspirant experiences.

So this is how yogis have viewed the entire structure of human personality. The yogic vision of human personality is not limited to the day to day experiences of body and mind and emotions, but they have integrated the manifest experiences with the unmanifest experiences as well. They fully realize that the aspect of life with which we identify is only external and superficial, but there is a deeper layer to our personality which has to be realized in order to experience the three oms.

You know why we chant om three times? With the chanting of three oms we are recognizing the three qualities of the self. In the first chanting it is om, omniscient. The second time it is om, omnipotent. The third time it is om, omnipresent. These are three qualities of the self which are confirmed at the time of chanting the three oms. So in the process of meditation, when we begin to move from pratyahara to dharana, there has to be a gradual expansion of awareness, and this awareness has to be expanded in a systematic way.

Awakening natural potential

One experiment was done in the USA about seven years back in which a hypnotist hypnotized someone and asked

that person how many leaves were on a plant which was kept in the room. Now consciously we may walk into any room and look around but we do not consciously recognize the quality of the room, nor the things that are in the room, but the subconscious mind observes everything. In the state of hypnosis that man actually gave the exact number of leaves that were on the plant kept in the room. He had not counted the leaves beforehand, he had gone into that room for the first time in his life.

What does this experiment mean to us? The mind has the ability to observe, and it observes all the time, every moment, but that process of observation is definitely not conscious, it is subconscious. If we can make this observation process, or this awareness, a conscious activity, imagine the transformation that will happen in life. Externally, to a person who has not developed that quality, this ability will look like a psychic power, but it is not a psychic power, it is the natural ability of the subconscious and the unconscious. We can say it is the total consciousness manifesting externally.

If you ask me, I would say there is no such thing as *siddhi* in this world but natural qualities of the human consciousness manifest after you have educated and trained yourself. For an ignorant person it may seem paranormal, but for the person who is experiencing it, it is a natural spontaneous process. This is how we move into the meditative states through the personality. In meditation it is not only the mind which is involved but each and every aspect of human nature, human mind and human personality. This has been the aim of yoga, to awaken the entire human nature so that one can experience total fulfillment.

Satsang

For nine years I have been practising yoga with intensity but I'm still caught by passions and attachment to the pleasures of life and this makes me suffer because I would like to feel myself more detached from all of this. What can I do to proceed with serenity on the path?

First of all, stop feeling guilty about the whole thing. There is a statement in the *Upanishads* which says that God created this world, and his presence can be felt everywhere in the world. For those who live in the world he has created pleasures. These pleasures may give happiness or they may culminate in pain, but nevertheless they are pleasures for the senses and the mind. Those who live in the world constantly interact with the pleasures. Therefore, with clarity of mind and detachment, continue to experience pleasures, and continue to evolve. Two concepts are given here, the first is about the continuation of enjoyment and the second is about detachment.

Now, from the question it seems that although the questioner has been practising yoga for nine years or more he, or she, has not come to terms with himself or herself. There is a split between the understanding of yoga and the involvement with life in the world. My request to you is that you do not look at yoga merely in the form of a practice but as a life process.

If you are able to see yoga as a life process, then every action will become part of Karma Yoga, every understanding will be part of Jnana Yoga, every effort that you make will

be a part of Raja Yoga and every experience which you may have will become part of Dhyana Yoga. So it is with this understanding that you must try to include yoga in your life. No doubt there are attractions and repulsions in life which give pleasure and pain, but do not allow yourself to be pushed down by them. Rather, try to be the master of your pleasure and pain and have greater understanding and better alignment with yourself. Instead of struggling, flow. I think this will help you.

Many of us find it difficult to go through the stage of pratyahara without losing awareness, why?

This question is being asked a bit too early, I haven't finished my talk on pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. I mentioned to you that we would discuss the gunas, the natural qualities with which we come into this world. Normally these gunas are divided in three groups: tamasic, rajasic and sattwic.

Tamasic generally has negative connotations for us, meaning bad, limiting, restricting, lethargic, dull, but the actual meaning of tamas is stagnation. This stagnation is the result of being conditioned to one particular pattern of thinking and living. Trying to be secure is a tamasic tendency because we are not wanting to change the state of security. If that change happens there is fear, there is conflict.

Rajasic also has similar connotations. In a negative sense it is domination of the self, but the nature of rajas is dynamic. All our ambitions, all our desires, actions and thoughts are rajasic by nature, where we seek to fulfill the needs of ego, the limited self. So we can say that self centered awareness is rajasic. Fearing a change and becoming insecure because of that change is tamasic. Expanded awareness is sattwa.

People like to have a very positive self image, always. You and I are both included in this. If someone tells us something good about ourselves we feel happy. If someone tells us something bad about ourselves we retire into our shell and we create a sense of comfort within our own mind. In pratyahara we have to recognize our weaknesses and our strengths. It is not a process of closing the eyes and going within, it is a

process of recognizing one's nature, quality and behavior so in this process there is no doubt that one can go beyond the state of pratyahara without losing consciousness.

If we think that by closing the eyes and withdrawing the senses we can go beyond the practices of pratyahara we will make mistakes because there is an absence of understanding of the gunas in our life. There will be no recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of human nature and human personality. So in the preliminary stages of pratyahara we become aware of our strengths and use them to progress further, we become aware of our weaknesses and transform them into positive qualities. In this way we move into states of dharana.

The sequences of asana and pranayama, should they take into consideration the weather? Why do young people prefer practice of more complex asana rather than pawanmuktasana?

Actually there are two questions here. One is about the practice of asana, pranayama and the weather. According to the rules of the practice of asana, yoga says that they should be performed in a temperature which does not create disturbance in the natural state of the body. The body should not experience the extremities of temperature at the time of asana practice. Please remember that the system of yoga has been evolved in a hot country. Therefore the tradition goes that you practice asana early in the morning when the atmosphere is cool and pleasant.

If you try and apply the same rule in Greenland it will be a bit difficult, there the afternoon would be most suitable unless you are practising in a heated room. As I have mentioned before, the aim of asana is to provide relaxation and harmony in the performance and functions of the body. If there are extreme climatic deviations then the nervous system, the skin and the circulation will be affected and it will create further stress in the physical organs and systems and functions. So use your judgement and I am sure you will find a proper way to perform the asana. From time to time, for some kind of

positive stimulation in your life, you can just go out in your underpants and practise surya namaskara in the snow. That is alright, but that should not be a habit.

In relation to the other question, why young people between twenty five and thirty five years of age like to practise complex asana and not pawanmuktasana, I would say lack of maturity is the main problem. When I was young, of course I am still young now, I used to like performing asana. I would feel good that I could do them without any problem, it used to boost my self image. Still there are many asanas that I can do which you cannot even dream of doing but, after understanding the process, I feel very comfortable with pawanmuktasana. So from my personal experience I would say it is a matter of maturity.

What do you mean by spirituality?

Do you want the book answer or the real answer? Real? You may not like it. Spirituality means experience of the nature of spirit. Spirit is definitely not the mind. In fact, from my understanding, spirituality dawns only after you have attained a meditative state and not before.

We learn to manage the various activities of the mind right from the beginning till the end of the dhyana state and we try to develop certain qualities which can be conducive to the experience of the spiritual state. These qualities which we evolve in the form of love or compassion or affection are not disciplines imposed on one's nature, though in the early stages we might try to impose certain positive attitudes on our natural state of mind. These positive attitudes help channel our patterns of behavior in the right direction but the basic nature or tendency of mind has not been transformed. The mind has not gone through a process of purification.

One can go out and roll in the dirt naked, come back in the house and put on freshly pressed new clothes. One can give the face and hands a wash, put on perfume and look clean, but by this external change have we cleaned or purified our body which is dirty? In order to get rid of the dirt it is

necessary that we take a shower or a bath and clean ourselves. In the same way, when we try to impose certain qualities or attitudes on ourselves it is like putting on a fresh set of clothes over an impure mind because we have not learned how to deal with the negativity nor with the reactions of the natural mind.

Up to the stage of dhyana we try to purify the mind and after the mind is purified we experience the state of samadhi. Samadhi is the clean, pure, untainted state of body, mind and spirit. For me spirituality begins after samadhi, because by then one has learned how to deal with the mind and one learns how to live that spiritual experience in day to day life. That spiritual experience is then a living experience, not just an intellectual concept.

If you look at Swami Anandananda's head you will find some scars there. Do you know how he got them? No? Well, if he permits me I will tell you the story of how he got those scars. Ah! I have his permission. When he first came to India, he was a very rash young person and he had this intense urge and drive to realize his divine self. In the first encounter with Paramahamsaji he said straight away, "I want to be realized instantaneously." Paramahamsaji said "Why?" Swami Anandananda said, "Look, I come from a culture where we have instant tea and instant coffee, and I want instant realization."

Of course it was a very lengthy discussion and I will not go into the details of it, but somehow he managed (I still wonder how he did it) to convince Paramahamsaji about the instant realization process. Paramahamsaji gave him a mantra – shall I tell them what the mantra was? Yes? With his permission I'm going to tell you what the mantra was, and you can try from tonight. The mantra was *Aham Brahma Asmi*, which roughly means "I am Brahman, the supreme self". Paramahamsaji told him to repeat that until he was able to actually experience what he was repeating.

Swami Anandananda, in his rashness, sought to realize his divine qualities. He sat down and began to repeat "Aham Brahma Asmi, I am that, I am that, I am that", continuously

for a week – of course with breaks for lunch, dinner and breakfast. When he felt he had realized, he came to Paramahamsaji and said, “I have completed my realization.” Paramahamsaji said, “We will make a test.” He gave him a bag and some money and asked him to go to Munger to purchase some vegetables.

Swami Anandananda very happily marched out of the gate thinking that the whole world was beautiful, divine and sublime, and not only he but everyone was part of that supreme reality. Sometimes I wonder whether he was high on LSD, because he used to look at the leaf of a tree and look at the beautiful glow around the leaf and say “Ah! That also is supreme reality.” The road, which is generally made of tar, looked golden to him, and he used to feel the divine energy emanating from the road also.

Eventually, in this state of contemplation, he reached Munger market. When he reached the market he saw everyone running from one point. So he asked one person, “Why is everyone running away?” That person said to him, “Look, you should also run because there is a mad elephant in the Munger market and that mad elephant is trampling everything that it finds in its path.”

Swami Anandananda started to think, “I am the supreme self. The elephant is also the supreme self. The whole world is part of that supreme self. What harm can a supreme self do to another supreme self? If you throw a bucket of water into the ocean what will happen? Nothing! They will merge into each other. So what harm can the supreme self of the elephant do to the supreme self of this being?” So, in his contemplation of the supreme self, he walked right up to the elephant. Unfortunately the elephant was not in a philosophical mood and it did not want to listen to the theories of Swami Anandananda. Instead it wrapped him up in its trunk, swung him round and threw him. And of course, Swami Anandananda was hurt and the scars can still be seen today.

He ended up in the Munger hospital where they gave him some stitches, plastered him up and sent him back to the

ashram, limping, without the vegetables. When he reached the ashram, Paramahamsaji was standing at the gate and said, "What happened?" Swami Anandananda started a stream of Italian abuse at him. Luckily no one understood what he was saying. When he had quietened down a lot, Paramahamsaji asked him to tell the whole story.

After listening to the whole thing, about the bright, shiny golden world and the happenings in the Munger market, Paramahamsaji asked him a question. "You knew that everybody is part of that divine nature, so why did you not listen to the person who warned you? He was also divine and he was warning you to run away."

It is a story which informs us that rational understanding is poles apart from actual realization. Spiritual life is not some kind of intellectual gymnastics. It is to be experienced in life after having controlled and gone beyond the mind and the nature of mind. Therefore, spirituality begins after having perfected the states of meditation.

How can one recognize a truly spiritual person and their faults?

If you want to recognize a truly spiritual person you do not have to look very far. Just look at the stage, and Swami Anandananda.

If you study the *Bhagavad Gita* you will find the answer to this question there. In the twelfth chapter from verse thirteen to verse twenty, the qualities of a spiritual aspirant have been described. It is a beautiful description of how a truly spiritual being lives. I will tell you about it in brief.

Without the feeling of mineness

Without the influence of ego

With total balance in pain and pleasure

With the quality of forgiveness

One who sees friends and enemies with the same vision

Is the spiritual being dear to me.

This is one verse from that description. Like this an entire description of a person with spiritual qualities has been given,

and that person is said to be realized. Their most important quality is the ability to surrender, the ability to surrender to the divine will and not just to a mental whim.

When one surrenders to the divine will, the external projections in life are of compassion, love, affection and devotion. In the life of saints and spiritual beings, apart from other qualities, we see these four qualities are predominant: love which is not conditioned, compassion which is not conditioned, affection for all which is non-selfish, and devotion to God and his presence in every living being. These are the four natural qualities which evolve in the life of a spiritual aspirant, apart from the other ones which have been mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Now you can imagine for yourself that one who is free from the bondages of ego is in tune with the cosmic self and has surrendered, or allowed the devotion for the cosmic being to manifest within. Also that person who has equal vision for friend and foe has the ability to express natural compassion for all. It goes without saying that one rises in spiritual realization beyond the effects of attraction and repulsion.

This is not something which I have read. It is something I see everyday more and more in our guru Paramahamsaji. He left the ashram on 8.8.88, after creating an empire of yoga, a chain of ashrams. One day he called me and said, "I am leaving tomorrow morning." Of course it was a matter of personal shock, but he said very clearly that although he had worked for yoga he was a sannyasin. He had worked to spread the knowledge of yoga, but that became a process to exhaust his own karmas.

When he felt that he had exhausted his karmas, what reason was there to carry on in the ashram? Just for a pleasant life? Just to have the recognition of being a guru? When he left the ashram, he left with only two *dhotis* that were given to him by his guru, Swami Sivananda. He did not accept any financial help except for 108 *rupees* which was forcibly put in his bag by us. The person who all the statesmen used to respect left the ashram alone, unrecognized by anyone. For a long time nobody even knew

where he had gone or what he was doing, or whether he was even alive.

What does this mean? If he was like one of us he would be happy playing the role of a guru and giving guidance to his followers. He would be happy with the status and respect which he would get from everyone. But he said no to all of that, "I have not taken sannyasa for all this, I have a different purpose in life."

Of course at that time, many of us felt that we were being left without any support, because of our attachment to him. He explained very logically that asking him to stop is similar to saying to a dying father, "If you were going to die, why did you give us birth?" This is something we would never ask our father, because we know that birth and death are realities of life which one cannot escape. There has to come a time when we have to stand on our own feet.

In the course of time we saw him evolve into a different kind of being. From a guru he became a siddha, and from a normal human he was transformed into a superhuman being. I do not want to talk too much about him because it is an endless topic, but in his life I have seen these spiritual qualities manifest. I am not saying this because he is my guru but because I have seen him with critical eyes, and despite all my inquisitive criticism I have never seen a fault in him. The qualities which have manifested in him have become the guidelines of my own life and I know that when I finish my term I will also follow the same path.

Spirituality in Daily Life

I will begin with a small story. The story begins with Paramahamsaji and why he chose the yogic movement, because according to the tradition of sannyasa we do not involve ourselves in the propagation of yoga. Rather we practise sadhana in order to evolve spiritually and to become an example of that lifestyle. This is the very orthodox and traditional view of sannyasa. However, Paramahamsaji did not feel satisfied by following a self centered sannyasa lifestyle because he had a different understanding of human nature and that understanding, which is very valid, is still very much alive in his mind. He knows that we all cannot have the same rubber stamp put on our foreheads. He knows that each one of us has our limitations, and also abilities and strengths, and he has accepted this nature of individuals rather than imposing a different set discipline. He chose yoga as a medium to propagate a way of life in which one could come to terms with one's personality.

Paramahansa Satyananda: offering an integrated system of spirituality to the world

He started teaching yoga in a very practical and systematic way. If you have read or come into contact with his teachings, you will find that he deals more with the practicalities of life and less with spiritual speculations. This is because he feels that spiritual understanding has to be an individual process

of knowing the self and he propagated yoga as a means to develop the qualities of body, mind and psyche.

When he felt that the yoga movement had established itself, then he started to develop the other aspects of service to humanity, which we see in the activities of Sivananda Math. The activities of Sivananda Math are not social service or charity, rather through the understanding of service, his emphasis is on realizing the potentials of love, compassion, affection and devotion to all. Externally the activities may seem to be social by nature, but his real aim is to make one aware of these qualities internally.

We can say that it is the next stage of yoga which he is introducing through the activities of Sivananda Math. This next stage is practising spirituality in daily life and for this his method of teaching is the practise of yoga and service. Although we have always looked superficially at the training and teaching, his aim has been to make us more internally aware of the teachings. In order to facilitate this process of internal understanding, he introduced the concept of sannyasa to the western world. Because of this action he was criticized a lot by the traditionalists in the country, but he had a purpose, a very specific purpose, for introducing sannyasa into the western culture.

Paramahamsaji wanted to introduce a lifestyle which is in conformity with spiritual thought, in which absorption and application of the strengths plays a very important part. Also one in which the qualities of viveka and vairagya eventually develop: *viveka* meaning discrimination, *vairagya* meaning not being attached to the desires and personal cravings. It was with this idea of developing the faculties of viveka and vairagya along with the observation and application of that understanding in daily life, that he introduced sannyasa.

Sannyasa and yoga

Now from his perspective and thoughts, this combination of sannyasa and yoga is very valid in order to grow and attain fulfillment in life, but sometimes we find that we face certain problems. Possibly this is due to lack of understanding, or

even I would use the word immaturity, of mind, because we have to deal with three aspects of our life: the social aspect, the sannyasa aspect and the yogic aspect. If there can be a good integration of these three aspects, then I feel that life will develop beautifully.

In the social life we have our work, family, aspirations and ambitions, and we have to work in order to fulfill those needs. Now while we are involved in the social activities of normal life, the process has to become a part of natural and spontaneous Karma Yoga. I would suggest that the problems of social life should not mix with the sannyasa lifestyle. You know, it's like we have two areas of work, one is the office, one is home. We do not always bring the work we do in the office back home, and we never carry the work we do in the house back to the office because in one aspect there is the feeling that it is my own, and in the other it is working to maintain oneself. In the same way the social aspect of our life should be kept separate from the sannyasa aspect of our life. Be involved in the world, be fully active, work to attain fulfillment socially, that is perfectly alright, but include the idea of Karma Yoga in your social life along with the selfishness and the ego plays.

Sannyasa life is an aspect of life where we work to develop our personality. When Paramahamsaji used to initiate people he would give certain indications about their life to the aspirants. Those people who were able to pick up on it used to progress, and those who were not able to pick up on it used to gradually isolate themselves from yoga and sannyasa, but Paramahamsaji had the ability to inspire people psychically and spiritually and in that way he was able to lead us without our knowledge.

Code of conduct

When this responsibility fell on me, I realized that I did not have that ability, nor the vision which Paramahamsaji had, and I do not even want it today. So I have found a way around it. I wrote down the qualities that one needed to develop in life and I started to give that out as a code of conduct for the different stages of sannyasa. These booklets have become the

guidelines for our growth through the sannyasa system of life because it is necessary that we perfect ourselves in some attitudes and qualities before progressing to the next stage.

So the practices of the sannyasa life are different from the practices of yoga. Keeping the same concept and vision that Paramahamsaji had for sannyasa, it is necessary that we understand the rules of sannyasa. These involve developing certain qualities in life, observing our patterns of behavior and action, coming to terms with our own internal behavior, developing the power of observation in order to eventually have the power of discrimination and also evolving a state of vairagya so that we are not caught up in the *maya* of the world. So in the guidelines of sannyasa, certain things have been given which we should try to practise and incorporate in our normal lifestyle.

Then we come to the practices of yoga. Yoga is a tool in discovering the various natures of our personality. This relates to an individual practising yoga and also to a sannyasin living in society. At the same time there is another aspect of yoga and our involvement with society, and that is developed through the propagation of the yogic techniques. When we have that mentality, then we become part of the mission of Paramahamsaji.

Paramahamsaji's mission is not limited to an association or organization, it also relates to individual efforts. In fact he has never supported an organization. He has neither encouraged nor discouraged them. They have evolved due to the goodwill of individual beings, and many organizations have dissolved after the dissolution of the goodwill of individual beings. He was never the one to build an empire. His mission was to approach people through people and not through an organized structure but in the normal world, to have a sense of identity and a structure of work, an association is also necessary.

Yogic university

In relation to Italy, when Swami Anandananda came to India over the past few years we used to discuss how to develop

the association, to increase the involvement of people. In the meantime our own organizational structure in India was undergoing a very big change, but I feel happy today that we have been able to provide stability and a new direction to the movement in India with the formation of the Bihar Yoga Bharati in Munger at Ganga Darshan. It will definitely play a very vital role in creating academic awareness of yoga.

Just to give you an outline of the academic structure, we are going to have three departments initially. One will be a Department of Yoga Philosophy, another of Yoga Psychology, and the third of Applied Yoga. In the Philosophy Department we shall be studying and discovering the concepts and thoughts that have been in the minds of the ancient yogis. In the Department of Yoga Psychology we will be dealing with theories and practices to develop human nature, with application of these principles in social structures, in prisons, in education, in rehabilitation and also in psychotherapy. In the Department of Applied Yoga we will be having another three sub-departments. One will be pure yoga, research on the effects of asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha on the body, brain and nervous system etc. Another will be pure therapy research and investigation into the healing aspects of yoga for management of various ailments and diseases. The third sub-department will be actual fieldwork outside the ashram. Bihar Yoga Bharati will be offering MA and MSc degrees and degrees which come beyond this level. The courses will be of two years duration.

Eventually in different countries, in different ashrams, we can set up constituent colleges of Bihar Yoga Bharati as well so that we can offer the same training to people who are unable to go and study at the main center in India. Of course for exams you will have to go there! It will lead yoga into a new dimension of social and academic understanding. Of course, since coming to Italy we have not had much time but we have discussed some aspects of creating a constituent college. It was my original idea to change the present structure of Satyananda Ashram Italy, but all these changes have to be done in conformity with the national laws.

It was my inspiration that the non-profit association be separate, which is Satyananda Ashram Italy, where we are able to offer comprehensive training in yoga and also an alternate lifestyle in the form of sannyasa. At the same time we have to have a commercial aspect of the institution to support the non-profit association. This can be done in the form of a small publishing house where the related books on yoga are published and distributed to society. Swami Anandananda should have an independent lifestyle according to the principles of sannyasa which he is used to, but at the same time, with the help of everyone, he should continue to work for the mission of yoga of Paramahamsaji.

I know that there were some rumors that he was quitting, but it was not him, it was me who was making him quit. It is necessary, and I also have the same lifestyle. I am not involved in any kind of organizational activity, yet I continue to guide them. In fact I even resigned from the Presidentship of Bihar School of Yoga in 1994 and made Swami Gyanprakash, whom most of you know, the next President of Bihar School of Yoga. I do not think it is the post or the name which is important, but the involvement of a person is of more importance than a post. Paramahamsaji does not have any post, but he has the biggest post in our hearts.

So the organization, or the mission, of yoga which we are trying to develop must be run in a professional manner according to the principles of yoga and sannyasa and ashram. When I use the word professional, I do not mean commercial, I mean it in the sense of having the good will of everyone, each one working together in harmony.

Let us see in which direction we are able to move in future. I am confident that with the support of all of you, and your goodwill and your love, we shall take many steps together in the spirit of yoga under the shelter of Paramahamsaji's guidance.

Satsang

Why is it dangerous to awaken kundalini without a master?

I think by now you should know why it is dangerous because I have been giving you the complete picture of yoga. It is like jumping in the middle of the swimming pool without knowing how to swim! You have to understand this very carefully; without proper training there cannot be any progress in yogic life or spiritual life.

I find it difficult to understand the logic of trying to control the kundalini when you do not even know what is happening in your own mind. Normally we are not able to handle our emotional upheavals, nor are we able to manage day to day stress. So how are we going to manage something that is happening in the deeper layers of consciousness about which we have absolutely no concept? Kundalini is an experience of the deeper levels of consciousness. I hope this is clear.

What is meant by managing and sublimating the intellect?

This is where the actual training of pratyahara and dharana comes into force. You have to understand that what we experience physically has a starting point in the mind. To give you an example, a desire is generated within the mind, and then in order to fulfill that desire, planning is done by buddhi, the intellect. It is then actualized by the indriyas, the senses. The result which we obtain from the involvement of the senses is then again experienced by the mind in the form of contentment and satisfaction.

Now this happens with things we can relate to in normal life. Desires, aspirations, ambitions, which are considered to be our needs, begin in the mind, manifest in the body and again fulfill the need of the mind. The things which we consider to be our need are regulated by the ego factor, the self centered awareness, the sense of individuality.

Apart from these activities of the manifest nature, there are certain activities of the unmanifest nature which alter the whole expression of the human personality, mind, behavior and attitude. Instincts belong to the unmanifest dimension. I am using the words 'unmanifest dimension' for a specific reason, meaning that it is something over which we have neither rational control nor rational understanding.

The instincts, according to yoga, are fourfold and we have discussed this. The first instinct is of procreation, the urge, the desire to become many. Physically, in the manifest dimension, this instinct manifests as the sexual urge. There are different levels of instinct manifesting in the human personality. In the subtle plane, the instincts represent the need for security. In the physical plane they take various forms according to the interaction with the senses.

The urge for procreation is the need to have security for the lineage – to leave a footprint in the sands of time. Physically it manifests as the sexual urge due to its interaction with the senses. In fact the entire manifest dimension is geared for procreation. It is something which happens naturally in every bird, in every fish in the water, in every human being. The senses, when related to the sounds, the colors, the forms, are geared to fulfil this need for procreation.

Logically, rationally, there is no control over this natural urge. Externally you say that you are a celibate or a brahmachari, according to the different spiritual traditions which exist in the world. You may be able to control your sensory need, but what about the psychic need? Externally and socially you may remain unmarried, you may not even see a person of the opposite sex. Externally you may lead the so-called celibate life, but that does not mean that you have overcome the urge which is a deep psychic instinct.

At one given time you are going to explode. You are going to say, “Enough of celibacy, back to enjoyment”. It is true. It happens like this, and it applies with the other instincts as well, that of fear, that of craving for fulfillment, and that of sleep.

So, to manage these four different instincts you have to go through a systematic process of perfecting the states of pratyahara and dharana. Pratyahara is a way of gradually withdrawing the senses from their link with the experience of objects and the pleasure derived from them. Therefore this state of pratyahara represents the sensorial control of the instincts.

When we move into the state of dharana we begin to work with the twilight zone of the mind, or we can even say the subconscious nature. In dharana the impressions of the instincts affecting the subconscious mind are channelled and brought under control. For this to happen, one has to go deep into the personality to the level of manomaya kosha and the pranamaya kosha and balance the energies which give rise to an instinct.

Then, in dhyana, the actual dimension of instinct is transformed and sublimated. That happens by channeling the pranic force. When the pranic force is channeled the consciousness is bound to go through a process of change and receptivity. So, it is the purification of consciousness and transformation of consciousness which leads to the sublimation of instincts, and it is made possible through the practices of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana.

What is the difference between spiritual guide and spirit guide? I follow the teachings of Satyananda but since a few months ago I also follow a spirit who gives me guidance, with whom I have had strong experiences. Can the two ways co-exist?

I will just tell you my views, I'm not asking you to accept them. For me, the spiritual guide is a person who can guide us through a process of sublimating the energy and consciousness. During this process we develop certain

qualities which are universal in nature. These qualities are cosmic qualities manifesting in an individual being. So, a spiritual guide teaches us to use the cosmic experience and apply it in day to day life.

A spirit guide can inform us about, or teach us, methods of communicating with other subtle life forms. These subtle life forms may teach us some things, but not necessarily the means to sublimate the energy, expand the consciousness and develop universal human qualities. After all, spirits also have their level of evolution. If you die, you will become a spirit. If I die, I will become a spirit. If somebody contacts me after my death, I will be telling them to practise yoga. That will be my level of teaching and evolution. Now, what I am saying should be clear. We all function according to our level of evolution. In this process of evolution we are bound by the karmas which guide the destiny of every spirit till one reaches the ultimate enlightenment.

The spiritual guide can make us aware of the divine qualities governing karma and destiny, life and individuality. That is the difference between a spiritual guide and a spirit guide. If you are indeed with a spiritual guide and also a spirit guide, then I think it should not create too much confusion in your mind as long as you remain clear regarding the aim of these different guides.

In one book, Swamiji states that the mind can lose itself if it is not concentrated and does not meditate on a psychic symbol but should I concentrate on the personal mantra at the same time?

In meditation you are instructed to use a psychic symbol when using a mantra. You may use any symbol of any religion as long as you are able to focus your mind on that symbol without any distractions. Mantras by themselves do not mean anything. They are not prayers of the Hindu religion or anything of that sort, rather they are sound interactions which awaken dormant areas of our brain and personality.

In the process of repeating the mantra, if you identify with a different religious symbol that is perfectly alright. I would

suggest that you keep your yoga practices and your religious practices and beliefs as two integrated systems in order to evolve spiritually. I see no reason why there should be any kind of confusion.

If a chakra opens can it then close, and can another person open your chakras?

In the process of chakra awakening there are three stages. In the first stage pranas activate in different chakras, and this is known as *prana utthana*. When the pranas are being awakened in different chakras it may feel as though the chakras are opening up but according to the system of Kundalini Yoga, initially the prana in each chakra has to be awakened and purified. The stagnation in the activity of the prana has to be removed, then the state of consciousness related to that chakra is known as the actual chakra awakening.

If during the initial process of chakra awakening the pranas are not activated fully, it is possible that they will again go into a state of dormancy. However, when the aspect of consciousness in each chakra is awakened then there is no possibility of again going back into a state of dormancy. In this stage there is no regression, only forward movement.

In the third stage, of kundalini awakening, it is stated in the tradition that kundalini can again go back into a state of dormancy. In the book *Kundalini Tantra*, Paramahamsaji has described the process, saying that once the kundalini passes manipura it will not fall back to mooladhara. If it does not pass manipura, there is a tendency for kundalini to again go back to the state of dormancy. This is the yogic view, and also the Buddhist view in relation to kundalini.

Regarding chakras, I think it should be clear that energy can stop its function, and that will seem like closing up of the chakra externally. You know that energy has the tendency to build up, to be used, and again there is the need to build it up. However with consciousness, once the states of mind are activated, they continue with the experience of awakening.

As regards other people awakening the chakras, it is possible but it is not a common practice. There have been

some cases in history where capable gurus have awakened the chakras of their capable disciples. One example is Ramakrishna Paramahansa touching the forehead of Vivekananda and giving him the vision of God. However everyone is not capable like Vivekananda, and everyone is not capable like Ramakrishna Paramahansa. So when you get a capable guru with a capable disciple then, no doubt, the guru can awaken the chakras of the disciple, but if you come to me to awaken your chakras you are in for a shock.

If every symbol lives in us like an unconscious reality and it is a common archetype of all humanity, why is the snake in tantra and in yoga a positive symbol of kundalini and of the spiritual ascent, while in the Catholic religion it is the filthy beast which has to be pushed away in order to ascend spiritually?

Is it true that the snake is a negative symbol in Christianity? I have also studied Christianity and unfortunately I do not share the same view as you. Let me tell you my views before you decide whether I understand.

Let us start from the beginning. When God created the world and the Garden of Eden, He put Adam and Eve there. One thing I could never understand was why God specifically pointed to one tree and told them not to eat the fruits of the tree, because it is human nature that if you say, “don’t do” they are going to do it.

So, in actual fact, God did want Adam and Eve to eat from that tree but he used human psychology to do it. Do you agree with that? Then, in comes the snake, and the snake is a very clever entity. The snake always represents knowledge, whether it is in the Christian tradition or the yogic tradition. It is the emergence of the snake and the seduction by the snake which makes Eve bring the apple to Adam.

Without knowledge there cannot be any concept of right and wrong. So the snake, as the symbol of knowledge, was sent, definitely, by the almighty Lord Himself, to bring the knowledge of right and wrong, just and unjust, to Adam and Eve. Whether we are going to fall or whether we are

going to rise depends on the application of that knowledge. It is stated in the Upanishads that knowledge can lead to ignorance. Knowledge can be the cause of human downfall when applied wrongly. There is ample evidence in the world to prove that knowledge, when used wrongly, is the cause of human downfall. If, originally, Adam and Eve, after eating the apple and gaining that knowledge, had applied their understanding for experiencing the simplicity of the Self, God would not have thrown them out of Eden. But they used that knowledge in order to express their fears and inhibitions, and therefore the fall.

So who is at fault here, the snake or human nature? In my opinion it is human nature, but because it was the snake who enticed them to eat the fruit, it has been blamed. The yogic traditions and other eastern mystical traditions have used the snake to denote wisdom, whereas other traditions which have looked at the snake negatively, have related it with power. This is a fault of our understanding because in every tradition of the world, right from the dawn of human civilization, the snake has represented power and wisdom.

Human Beings

Today is considered to be a very auspicious day because traditionally, during this time, people in India do sadhana for the grace of the Divine Mother and this is the day when the worship of Mother Durga begins. Of course when the events here were being planned it was not in the minds of the organizers to have such a program today, but someone else guided events and today we are all meeting here. Later on there will be a fire ceremony as well and I feel that whatever you are going to get today will be with the blessings of the Divine Mother.

To begin with you will be getting your certificates of having the ability to teach yoga and that is the beginning of your contribution to the growth of human society. It is definitely a very big responsibility which you must be very careful with, because it becomes your commitment to teach and guide others according to your understanding and knowledge. As teachers you will eventually have to evolve certain qualities within yourself. Just teaching is not enough. Yoga does not recognize only teaching, it involves supporting the needs of the individuals whom you are teaching, without getting caught up in their headtrips; maintaining your own clarity of mind and your aim.

Along with teaching you have to add the components of affection for the students, the ability to understand their needs, and to dedicating yourself to help them as much as possible. Involvement with human society is a long life

commitment and this is one point which I would like to emphasize again and again so that you can understand it.

Maintaining a broad vision

Give your best without killing yourself, and if you can do that, then eventually you will evolve into a good teacher and helper of human society. Live the spirit of yoga in real life and not only intellectually. This is the only message which I have to give to you today. You have received your certificate of affiliation, and this affiliation is with the mission of Paramahamsaji, which has been to promote yoga with the aim of providing people with a different understanding of human life. Maintaining a broad vision of life is the aim of Paramahamsaji's mission.

A small frog used to live in a well. It had taken birth there and, for the frog, that was his world. One day it so happened that another frog fell in the well who had come from the ocean, the frog of the ocean was going on a world tour. When they both met they started to talk about their homes. The well frog said, "Where are you from?"

The ocean frog said, "I am coming from the ocean."

"How big is the ocean?"

"It's immense, its huge, its big!"

So the well frog gave a jump from one corner of his well to the other corner and said, "Is your ocean this big?"

"No, it is a hundred times bigger than this."

"Anything bigger than my well does not exist in the world. You are a liar. You get out!"

We live in a house of concepts, ideas and beliefs which we create for ourselves, and anything which does not fit in with the concepts and ideas which we have tends to be anti-individual. It does not fit in with our mentality and we can't accept it. As yoga teachers and people associated with the mission of Paramahamsaji it is our duty to have a broad vision about everything and, in my opinion, there are certain qualities which need to evolve.

The first is the quality of acceptance, acceptance of the patterns of thoughts and beliefs and lifestyles of other people.

The second is the quality of understanding, understanding the viewpoints of other people with whom we interact. The third is the ability to adjust. Just as we adjust with the weather, in the same way, there has to be adjustment with other people. If it is hot we remove clothes, if it is cold we put on clothes and we try to maintain ourselves comfortably. In the same way, even in interaction with other people there has to be adaptation. If somebody's blowing hot, remove your clothes so that you do not feel the heat and you are comfortable. If somebody is blowing cold, put on clothes. Generally we do not do this and there is a reaction. The fourth quality is maintaining your own thoughts clearly. When you are able to maintain your own clarity of thought you are not influenced by the reactions and negativities of the world.

If you can develop some of these qualities you will be a successful human being. That has been the mission of Paramahamsaji, to make one a successful human being in life and in order to do this he has used the medium of yoga. So, I wish you good luck in your attempt to become a successful human being.

Satsang

Swamiji, many saints have had the experience of ecstasy even without performing any particular practice, how can you explain this?

This has been explained in many different ways during our discussions. Every human being has their level of evolution and each human being is affected by the law of karma. It is the theory of karma which plays a very important role in the processes of evolution of the human consciousness. According to yogic thought, what we are experiencing today, the karma which we are experiencing today, is actually the fruit of those karmas we planted many years ago. And the seeds of karmas that we plant today, we will reap in the future. When you plant a seed in the ground it does not grow immediately into a flowering tree. In the same way, whatever we accumulate in the form of karma will show its results in the future.

Similarly, at a particular point in evolution there is going to be physical death, the karma will carry on in the next life. It is not necessary that we begin with primary class every time we take birth. Those saints or yogis who have had that spiritual inclination from the beginning are reaping the results of their karmas from before. This also has been explained in yoga as a state of mind which is receptive to the process of evolution. So naturally it becomes possible for many people to experience ecstasy or have similar spiritual experiences without any spiritual effort because they have already attained that level of knowledge, awareness and realization.

As practitioners of yoga we try to improve the present lifestyle so that the impressions of this lifestyle are experienced later on. You know, human beings have a funny mentality, and it has been my observation that to act according to that mentality in our present life creates disharmony. We tend to live in the past, worry about the future, and we miss the present existence totally and completely. We live in the experiences of yesterday and worry about tomorrow, and today does not exist for many people.

The training which we receive in yoga makes us aware of today. Therefore you may come across the statement in yoga, “Be in the present”. Desire understanding from the experiences of the past, better yourself, better your performance, better your expressions and actions in the present. This betterment will give you the ability to deal with what comes tomorrow.

In this we also see the application of yogic principles according to our need and environment. In fact we can say that the entire yogic training is to provide this state of perception. What we have been studying in the last few days has been a very simple understanding of the yogic principles. In this process of yoga it is not important to practise and practise many many new things all the time. It is the application of the understanding, the knowledge and the practice which is important in yoga.

Knowing a lot has no meaning in yoga. Applying whatever little you know has greater meaning. It is in this spirit that you have to understand yourself and not worry about what we wish to, what we aspire to, what we want to achieve in the future. I am speaking from a personal perspective, not from a social perspective.

In human nature there are four aspects which are important: strength, weakness, ambition and need. These four aspects have to be managed properly in order to realize our nature. We have certain qualities which are strengths, but we are not aware of these qualities. If we do have an understanding of them it becomes a process of ego. That understanding becomes an ego understanding,

“I am like this” or “I am superior”. If we become aware of our weaknesses, then there is a state of depression. We feel insecure, we get an inferiority complex and are unable to cope with the events and experiences of life.

So the practices of yoga, whatever they may be, whether they are asana or pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, kriya or kundalini, aim at one thing. They channel the weaknesses and strengths in the right direction so that they do not create any kind of mental and emotional imbalances and difficulties. They awaken the faculties of the self so that they are used creatively in life. The moment that you are able to use your strengths creatively you will reach different, higher states of consciousness. In that state of consciousness you may experience ecstasy, you may experience many other things but as a practitioner you should not aim for ecstasy or something beyond the practicalities of life. Give yourself a chance to understand the actualities of life.

Swamiji, how is it possible that even Gopi Krishna, after ten years of daily meditation, had the experience of awakening kundalini in such a terrible and dangerous way so that he risked his life?

Gopi Krishna was a self made man, and he had some basic samskaras which ultimately lifted him from the negative awakening of kundalini. The samskaras provide intuitive understanding of the process and the method which one needs to follow in order to harmonize such awakenings. Normally we lack such samskaras which can give us a clear indication of the direction in which we have to go. In the absence of such samskaras we need the guidance and help of a guru, but if the samskaras are there, through the process of trial and error you can always find the right balance.

The samskaras are also influenced by the cultural background of a person. If somebody has kundalini awakening in India, people would try to understand what is happening before deciding whether one should go to a mental asylum or an ashram, because culturally there is awareness of a spiritual dimension as well. The theories or concepts of yoga are

known to people, although they may not practise them. In the absence of that understanding and samskara it is possible to end up in a mental hospital under psychiatric treatment.

It should be understood clearly that for higher stages of spiritual understanding and experience a guru or guide is needed. Especially for those who do not have the cultural background which supports spiritual and psychic growth and understanding. So my feeling about it is that Gopi Krishna was a self made man, and he managed himself very well.

How can we keep under control the strong urge of falling in love, and how is it possible not to be carried away by the strong waves of love if they are part of you, and how can we combine all this in yogic practice?

Sorry, I have no experience. Unfortunately I have not fallen in love with anyone, and fortunately no one has fallen in love with me. So, whatever I say will lack experience. I actually do not understand the question but let me just try to answer it from whatever little understanding I have.

The love which we experience in life is conditional love, which carries with it lots of attachment and even possessiveness, and this love is being used to satisfy the personal needs of body, emotions and security. Yoga does not talk about conditioned love. It speaks about the unconditioned love. In yoga, love is an aspect of *Bhakti Yoga*, which is generally translated as the yoga of devotion. However the actual process of Bhakti Yoga is changing the conditioning of love, affection and possessiveness into an unconditioned universal state. That force of love is then directed towards the experience of unity within.

When the force of love is directed to experience this unity of the Self it is not only an experience of unity with God but with every individual being on the planet. This feeling of oneness, feeling the same emotion and affection for everyone, is known as transcendental love. In the process of yoga one comes to this point of transcendental affection and love which positively sustains and nurtures every being involved with it. That is the yogic view.

Swamiji I have read about Bhakti Yoga and I would like to know what one should do when one feels this drive in the heart towards the divine and the Guru, besides practices.

Imagine that you have to sit on a hot plate where they make pizza for one minute. That one minute will feel like one hour or even like eternity because there is no unity nor balance in whatever is happening in the body and mind. There is no merging of ideas and mind on concepts, no interaction. However if you find a friend and begin talking, no matter how unnecessary the topic may be, one hour will feel like a very short time because there is identification with concepts and ideas, and interaction with another person.

So the link is important in Bhakti Yoga. If the link did not exist, then you would be totally disinterested in what is happening. It could be happening here. Some of you may feel, “What nonsense he is talking”, and may want to get up and leave the room to have a cup of tea or coffee. Some people may react the other way, they may say, “Interesting subject, worth listening to, we can have the coffee afterwards”. This is a link which can be created, and is created, between one individual and another individual. It is the link which can be created between an individual and a concept or an idea or a belief. The creation of this link is an aspect of Bhakti Yoga. Paramahamsaji has said that it is Bhakti Yoga which becomes important in our discovery of Self.

In normal life we perform actions and the actions give birth to an understanding. When we have that understanding in the form of knowledge or wisdom, then there is the generation of inner trust, faith and conviction. Understanding which arises out of action generates conviction, faith and trust. So we see there are three stages of human interaction: action, understanding or knowledge and conviction or trust.

In yogic terminology it is Karma Yoga converting itself into Jnana Yoga and Jnana Yoga changing itself into Bhakti Yoga. *Karma* is the path of action, *jnana* is the path of understanding and knowledge, *bhakti* is the path of the self trusting nature. When you add the word ‘yoga’ to these three names, then the concept and the quality changes. Karma which is performed

naturally and spontaneously along with yoga becomes action filled with harmony. Understanding and knowledge when combined with yoga becomes the process of harmonious understanding which does not create inner mental conflict. The conviction and trust which we generally have, when combined with yoga becomes a process of inner purification and deep trust in oneself.

So we can say harmony in action is *Karma Yoga*, harmony in knowledge is *Jnana Yoga* and harmony in inner experience is *Bhakti Yoga*, and we need to integrate these aspects of our life. Generally our actions are not in conformity with our understanding, concepts and thoughts, and therefore we find different imbalances in our life patterns. When, through the practice of yoga, we are able to have this inner harmony then the ability to trust oneself is a spontaneous process.

Development of this ability to trust creates a link between the individual and the external social and cosmic environment which leads to clarity of knowledge and psychic experience. This clarity of knowledge and understanding and these psychic experiences lead to unity of individual mind with the cosmic mind. Therefore Bhakti Yoga is said to be the final yoga which spontaneously evolves in the life of a practitioner.

You may practise Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Mantra Yoga and other yogas, but these yogas represent a process of working on yourself. When you have worked on yourself and have come to terms with yourself, then Bhakti Yoga begins. Transformation of the human quality is Bhakti Yoga. Using the inherent qualities of life for the betterment of our life is Bhakti Yoga.

Why has it been defined as the yoga of devotion? There is total belief in the potential of an individual being. The modern research which is being done into human genetics shows that there is a link between the offspring and the parents and the grandparents and the great grandparents. I am sure that if they continue with this research they will go very far into the past and eventually discover the gene which links us with God. That Godly gene is definitely inside

the body, we just have to find a way to know that gene and we do have the potential of using that power and wisdom creatively.

When one begins to use power and wisdom creatively, then that is the state of devotion. This is the yogic definition of devotion, not the normal one. The normal definition is in the form of adoration, in the form of feeling that there is a higher entity governing our life, and surrendering to that higher entity. It is realizing that there is a higher entity governing life. The yogic definition is fusion with the higher self by overcoming the ego and the manifest nature.

In order to attain this fusion, one has to overcome the ego, the mind, the attraction and the repulsion. Attraction and repulsion, pain and pleasure, these are states of mind which pull our attention, or which divert our attention to the external world of the senses.

In the state of harmony the energy of God begins to flow in an individual being, and that is the state of Bhakti Yoga. So please remember that eventually, as a process of your own personal growth and evolution, you will come to the state of bhakti in course of time. Bhakti is the natural expression of the harmony of the spirit, and this is what we all aspire for in the process of our evolution. Moving from the ridiculous to the sublime, that is Bhakti Yoga.

Satsangs in Florence

Please tell us something about Paramahansa Satyanandaji's life and mission.

Paramahamsaji began having spiritual experiences at an early age and the people around thought that he had just become unconscious at those times but I feel that if these states had been seen in somebody of an advanced age it would have been recognized as samadhi. He would naturally go into states in which he seemed unconscious, and he would stay like that for two or three days. Of course, because he was a child he could not express or analyze the state. His parents could not understand it either because they had no spiritual background and it is natural for parents to get anxious if their child goes into an unconscious state or coma without any rhyme or reason.

They tried many different types of treatment but nothing happened. In the course of time they took him to various sannyasins who used to pass that way. They prophesied that one day he would be a sannyasin, and not an ordinary one but one of the highest calibre. So the samskaras of sannyasa and renunciation were with him from the early days. His whole life was moving towards that aim.

When he was about seventeen or eighteen he came in contact with a tantric yogini from Nepal. She taught Paramahamsaji about kundalini, about chakras and also about the tantric systems. She said, "I can only teach you this much because you have very strong samskaras for spiritual life and

sannyasa, but in order to become stable it is necessary for you to find a guru.”

At the age of nineteen, Paramahamsaji left his home and his father actually came to the bus station to see him off. His father said, “Look, you are going away now. You are going on a different journey and we do not exist for you on that journey. You should definitely never look back in your life. You are going with our best wishes but the only instruction I can give you at this time is do not look back.”

‘Not looking back’ has always been the philosophy of Paramahamsaji. Even nowadays he says, “When I left my home I did not look back. I joined my guru’s ashram and lived in Rishikesh for many years. When I left my guru’s ashram after he had given me diksha, I did not look back. I did not go back to Rishikesh while I was working for my mission. Now I have left Bihar School of Yoga and the mission, and I am not going back. There is no question of my returning to the places I came in contact with before. Even when I leave this body, if God asks me if I want to go back I will say no.”

He developed his own understanding of sannyasa which was natural and spontaneous. He never studied in the ashram, only worked, but he picked up everything. For example he would hear a lecture by Swami Sivananda, sit down at the typewriter and type the whole lecture verbatim. He had a photographic memory. In this way he would prepare and type manuscripts and books of Swami Sivananda’s lectures. In those days there were no tape recorders, not in the mountains anyway. Paramahamsaji had a very sharp and receptive intellect and was able to pick things up just by being in the environment.

When he was leaving the ashram after Swami Sivananda had given him the mission of yoga, Swami Sivananda initiated him into the higher practices of yoga such as *Kriya Yoga* and *Kundalini Yoga*, in just a few minutes. What he has taught us, he picked up from his guru in five or ten minutes. It was transmission from a capable guru to a capable disciple.

Paramahamsaji never felt that he was a guru or a master. He had a very deep love for his guru and considered himself always as a disciple. Even after Swami Sivananda's departure from the physical body Paramahamsaji was in contact with him psychically. He was always being guided by his guru and he was the only person in the galaxy of Swami Sivananda's disciples who was initiated into the Paramahamsa order.

Swami Sivananda told him, "I am initiating you now into the Paramahamsa order but you will have to work hard to come to that level of Paramahamsa in your later life. First you will have to exhaust your karmas and your ambitions and your desires. When you know that you have exhausted everything, you have fulfilled everything, then you will eventually leave human society and establish yourself in the Paramahamsa state." So Paramahamsaji asked, "Well, if I have to wait that long, then why don't I lead a normal life and exhaust my karmas that way?" Swami Sivananda said "No. In the life of a *grihastha* in society one accumulates karmas and attachments, and the motivation is self motivation. As a sannyasin one learns not to be self oriented, you have a definite mission in which you dedicate yourself to God, guru and mission. Therefore you should always remain a true sannyasin and work to fulfill all your karmas and samskaras."

So that is what he did through the propagation of yoga. You know, after coming to fulfillment in his life, after having experienced everything, he left. When he left, he went without informing anyone and just walked out of the gates. The only people who knew about his departure were myself and a couple of others. Nobody in the ashram knew that he was planning to leave. Even for those who knew he was going it was a very hard moment.

At one point there came a time in his life where he was absolutely not interested in anything. As if he had totally withdrawn himself and was trying to figure out what to do next. He travelled around India visiting different holy places and people, totally incognito. Then he received some inner inspiration which made him go to Deoghar and establish himself there.

Of course I am making a long story short. Even in Deoghar he did not want any kind of facility for himself. People felt a lot of concern for him because he had left the ashram at the age of seventy. That is the time when everyone looks for stability, comfort and a good life but he said, “No. My time has come. I have not worked to bind myself to an institutional structure, nor do I want people or disciples to feel emotionally attached to me because I am just a follower of the instructions of my guru.”

There came a time when he even renounced his *geru* clothes and started to live as an *avadhoota*. He used to sleep on floors with mattress and coverings, now he just sleeps on the floor, even in winter, all the time, no covering of any kind. This is what is seen externally, but while he was doing all this, living the lifestyle of a Paramahansa – a real Paramahansa – he was also growing very fast psychically and spiritually. The sadhanas which he was performing were lifting him up spiritually, taking him up beyond body awareness.

Now I will tell you what I have felt while seeing this process, although one should not even try to describe it because it is a personal feeling. I have seen certain things which for me are very important in life, in order for one to live a complete life. I am speaking from my perspective on life and the purpose of life, from the perspective of a sannyasin. He is a person who has never lost his vision in his life. In the times of high status he always maintained clearly what he had to do and the desire to establish himself in his real nature was always at the forefront of his mind. Many times he also said, “When I took sannyasa I had a definite idea in mind, that I had to discover what, or who, God is, and what my relationship is with God.”

When one takes sannyasa there is a feeling that one has to know oneself, attain self-realization, but in course of time we find that sannyasins deviate from their original aim. They get caught up in the lifestyle of an institution, the status that disciples and institutions provide them with. The means becomes the end for them, but this did not happen in Paramahamsaji’s life.

On one of Paramahamsaji's journeys around India after he had left the ashram he wrote:

*"Let me roam alone on the banks of the rivers,
with the name of Shiva on my lips
and the image of Devi in my heart.
Let the ground be my bed and the sky my covering.
And when I die,
let it be like a whisper of wind in the grass.
Nobody should even know that I have died.
No gravestone should mark my grave.
Just like a wave in the ocean
that comes to the shore and then disappears,
that is how I want to live."*

This poem reflects his feeling about the state in which he lives, and evidently right now he has evolved to a very high state of consciousness. He doesn't move out from his area but he knows everything that is happening in the vicinity. One example, a real one, that I can give is that one day after practising his sadhana he got up and called Swami Satsangi and said, "In a village there is a lady who is an invalid, she has six kids, her house has burnt down, go and help her." At that time Sivananda Math had started to make houses and to work in the villages of the area. It took us three days to locate her village. When we found the lady she was an invalid because of her hands. Her house had burned down three days previously and she was living under a tree with her six children, so we immediately made a house and settled her there. But the main thing was, you know, how did he, just by being in one small room, know what had happened to that lady so far away?

There was another story of a lady who had come one day to the hospital which we have built in Deoghar. The doctors had diagnosed her as having intestinal TB, and it was in the final stage. The doctors said, "Sorry, we cannot do anything. You please go." Just as that lady was walking away, Paramahamsaji called one person and said, "Ask the lady who is leaving here to stop, and ask the doctor to see me." When

the doctor came, Paramahamsaji blew up. He said, “How can you refuse medicine to a sick person?” The doctor said, “Swamiji, we have nothing to give her, it is the final stage of intestinal TB, and we don’t have anything.” Paramahamsaji said, “Give her three aspirins, she should take one a day.”

On the fourth day, the lady came walking merrily down the road. When they checked her, they found absolutely no trace of abdominal TB and the doctor became very excited and wanted to inform Paramahamsaji about it. Paramahamsaji refused to see either the doctor or the patient, but his grace had already worked.

When we see things like this happening in real life, what are we to think? Just as you shrug your shoulders, we also have to shrug our shoulders. There is no explanation of the things which he is doing now. He is working on a different, non-physical level and everyone is benefitted by it. So, from a human being he has become a super being, from an ordinary person he has become a siddha.

Swamiji, how early in your life did Paramahamsaji start sharing the experiences of his life with you?

Paramahamsaji has not spoken about his life to anybody, but I have been lucky in that sense. My earliest memory is when I was six. I had come to the ashram and was living there. In the early days the ashram was just a tiny place and we used to sleep anywhere and everywhere. I don’t know if you have seen the old ashram. Just as you enter the gate there is this tin shed. That used to be my sleeping place for ten years, every night put up a choke and make the bed. Every morning, wrap everything up and put it on top of the store.

One night when I was lying down he came out. He called me and said, “Come, we will go for a walk”. And we started walking around the gardens. That was the first time he told me about his life and what was happening. That is the first memory. That was the time he spoke about the growth of BSY. He said that it would be a center where hundreds would come and study. That is coming true now. Many people have come,

and they have studied and gone, but in a systematic way, an academic way, that prophesy will be fulfilled now.

Did Paramahamsaji talk to you early in life about your own dharma, your own purpose? Or is that too personal?

I know that he has always guided me, even when I was not near him. Most of my life I have lived away from him and from Bihar School of Yoga. I was in India until the age of ten, but I was with him for only four or five years. In that time he taught me many things through yoga nidra. Then I left India and travelled around the world till 1983, so I was away from him, travelling in other places and had very few physical contacts with him.

I returned to India when I was twenty three and then from '83 to '88, I was with him again for five years. After that he left. So actually in all my life I have only spent ten close years with him, the rest has been on and off, contact and away, but I have felt that I have always been instructed and guided by him. I know it to be true. I am sure he must have planted some seeds which in the course of time will grow and develop although he has never formally told me so, but from the performance so far I know he is satisfied.

What is meant by ego?

Ego is a very loose term in English to describe the sense of individuality. This individuality which is represented by ego is only a self centered or self oriented awareness. Ego also denotes some form of selfish or negative interaction of the individual self with the external environment. If we say, "I have ego", that means I am not aware of my positivity, rather I am more aware of my personal ambitions and needs and try to fulfill them.

There is a beautiful word in Sanskrit which describes the process of ego. The word is *ahamkara* which means identity of the self or identity of the individual being. In the yogic tradition it is said that when one is living in the manifest world, ego manifests. This ego or ahamkara is the sense of individuality, the sense that I am a unit, a distinct unit of

the supreme reality or consciousness. When this self-identity becomes involved with the gunas or the qualities of life, then its expression changes.

Please speak on yoga as therapy.

There are three aspects to a yoga practice: curative, preventive and promotive. The main thrust of yoga is in the promotion of human health. This is not confined to the physical body alone but it is the total health of the human personality through physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, psychic to spiritual dimensions.

A good combination of the normal practices of yoga will improve one's health. One thing important here is that it is a good combination of practices, just Hatha Yoga is not enough, just Raja Yoga is not enough. A human being combines the qualities of head, heart and hands. The head represents rational, intellectual interaction. The heart represents emotions and the interaction of feelings and sensitivity. The hands represent the external interaction of body and mind with society and the cosmos. If we only try to concentrate on one aspect of our life there is bound to be imbalance so there should be a good combination of practices to improve the overall health of human personality.

Another aspect of yoga which is now emerging very strongly is the curative aspect, the therapeutic aspect. A lot of work has been done on the management of physical ailments and problems, and some work has been done on the management of mental problems and disorders. These are still considered to be specialized areas of yoga. In order to receive help it is necessary that one goes to a proper yoga teacher who understands human nature.

The entire system of yoga in the tradition can be considered to be a form of psychotherapy in which one learns to manage the external or conscious, subconscious and unconscious behaviors of mind. Those who have studied traditional yoga in the form of the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali will have come across a statement near the very beginning, that yoga is control of the modifications of

mind. It is supposed to be the classical text on yoga where the entire approach of yoga is to teach the management of the human mind.

Physical practices of yoga play a very small part in the *Yoga Sutras*, only meditative asanas have been described. Other treatises on yoga describe other systems of yoga such as Hatha and Bhakti Yoga, but most of the yogic literature has dealt with the mind. This system is gradually evolving and is becoming a powerful tool in the management of mental, emotional and psychic imbalances. From our understanding it is possible to treat different mental imbalances and reach a 'normal' state through the practices of yoga but it takes time, no doubt. If somebody is under medication, under treatment, then combining the treatment with yoga psychotherapy will be very useful.

The third aspect of yoga is preventive. Reach an optimal state of health now, through the practices, and avoid symptoms of stress and tension which can create an imbalance.

In a meeting we had many years ago, Paramahansa Satyananda said I must become a swami. What is the concrete meaning of this?

Why haven't you become one? You see 'swami' is not a religious word, it represents a state of being. It is not monkhood, rather it denotes the state of total control over the mind. *Swami* means, master of oneself, *swa* meaning self and *ami* meaning master. It represents a practitioner of yoga who is aspiring to go deep into the system to perfect himself. Even while living a normal life, it is possible to have the attitudes of a swami and the lifestyle of a swami. Of course there are certain disciplines which one has to follow and in these disciplines we try to observe the nature of the mind and to develop qualities in life.

We tend to identify more with the concept than the practice. If I initiate somebody into sannyasa, they think they are already evolved beings and that they have reached a certain level. They forget that in the tradition of sannyasa the degree is given first and the thesis comes later on. The

degree which is given first represents the trust and the faith that the teacher or guru has in you.

The guru desperately hopes that in the course of your life you can write a few pages of your thesis, but, as soon as we get the degree, we display it on the wall and we say we are perfect. That way, instead of improving we actually deteriorate. In fact there are many people who become more egoistic, self centered, negative, selfish and horrible.

The understanding or the knowledge of sannyasa has to evolve naturally from within. *Sannyasa* means an inner harmony which expresses itself externally and which affects every other being with whom we come in contact. Swami represents an aspirant who is striving to reach that level of perfection. When you perfect the state of swami, you become a *Paramahansa*. When you are in the level of *Paramahansa* you have to work hard to perfect yourself in another dimension.

In the world you have to work first and then get your certificate. In spiritual life you get your aim first and next you have to work towards that aim, so that from the very first stage you are aware of the direction in which you have to go. So, be a sincere aspirant, and that way one day you will become a swami too.

Please speak about the guru disciple relationship.

Well first we have to understand the word guru, and then we have to understand the word disciple. *Guru* means a person who can guide us in our process of evolution, and more specifically, to become stable in our spiritual life. Nowadays the word guru is being used very loosely all over the place. In India every rickshaw puller is known as guru, it is used as a slang term meaning one who can take us to our destination. Even the taxi driver is a guru.

The actual meaning of guru is dispeller of darkness, one who can give you a new positive and creative vision of life so that you can experience universal creativity within yourself. Therefore we should understand guru in the spiritual sense and not in the physical sense.

The word disciple also should be understood. It does not mean pupil or student. It means someone who has the urge to realize the inner self and is able to sincerely follow the guidelines given by the guru. The word for disciple in Sanskrit is *shishya*, which means one who can surrender the ego. When one can surrender that individual identity, let go of that individual identity, then one is a disciple.

The relationship between guru and disciple is not only academic, it can happen at different levels too. You must have read the life story of Milarepa. His guru did not teach him meditation, did not call him to any satsang. Rather he worked him like a slave, carrying stones and making houses, then breaking it all down and building in some other place.

Now consider that you are the spiritual seeker in Milarepa's place. If you only had to carry stones from one site to the next for many years, what would you think? "This guru is crazy – I have not come here for this kind of work, I have come for my spiritual realization!" We would have left him within the week and gone to find someone else who dressed according to our beliefs and inclinations. I mean, for us the guru has to fit into our compartment and we don't have to fit into the guru's compartment. Therefore we do not find gurus in this world now. Nowadays people have even started to divorce their gurus. In this way there can never be any internal link created.

The link which is created naturally between guru and disciple is of simplicity and purity. This link is the factor which unites the spirit of the guru with that of the disciple, and at the spiritual level they become one. You must have heard of the Indian epic, the *Ramayana*. In that there is a story of Hanuman, where somebody asks him about his relationship with Sri Rama. He gives a very beautiful answer, "Externally, physically, I am working for him, I am his servant. Mentally and emotionally, he is my friend. Spiritually, there is no difference between him and me."

This is the sentiment of love and simplicity and purity which evolves between guru and disciple. Definitely it is a very deep and abiding relationship which can span lifetimes.

Could you tell us about Paramahamsaji's purpose in November/December?

Well, you must have received his invitation and many things are stated in that. The invitation is from him but it is not for him, it is for people who wish to see him. After people came to know that he is living where he is now, they started knocking at his door without consideration for what he is doing.

He is definitely involved in very high sadhana, going beyond the stage of Paramahamsa and passing through the stage of Avadhoota. An *Avadhoota* is a person who is transcending the body and world consciousness. In the state of Avadhoota there is a constant state similar to ecstasy. When Paramahamsaji left the ashram, as per the guidelines he had received from his guru, he started performing higher sadhanas. In order to stabilize himself in the practice and in the state of consciousness he had to isolate himself from everyone. There comes a stage in the life of a sannyasin where there has to be isolation so one can continuously live in a perpetual state of sadhana.

When there are distractions of people coming and going then the mind is not fixed in sadhana. These distractions definitely do not aid the process for a spiritual aspirant. He had given clear indication that nobody should disturb him. He went so far as to say that we should consider him to be dead. He said very clearly, "Do not come and see me at all." Why? Because whatever he had to teach he had taught. It has been written and published and people just have to understand what is there in order to evolve.

As always happens, people are never satisfied with such answers because of emotional attachment. At every odd hour they would go and disturb him, so he said, "Okay, those who want to see me can come in this month. I will see them, give them instructions and then after that I am not going to see anyone." So it may even be the last opportunity that we will have to physically come into contact with him, or maybe after a few years he may again give darshan. It all depends on him. It is an opportunity which has been given to connect not only with him, but with the higher purpose of life.

What he is doing now is not the ordinary yoga to which we are exposed. The practices of Paramahansa sannyasins are very different. Through these practices one develops a very strong control over the physical elements. In the state of *siddhi* one controls nature and the elements, not only externally but also within the body.

One example of his sadhana is that from January to June he performs a particular Vedic sadhana in which he has to sit between the fires. Do not ask me why or how because I will not tell you the reason and you would not understand it either. It belongs to a higher level of sadhana and spiritual experience but I will describe what one can feel physically.

Four fires are burnt, one at the front, one at the back, one on each side. The sun, the summer Indian sun, is the fifth fire. Where he sits in the middle, the temperature goes up to ninety degrees. He practices that in summer. What he does there is his personal affair but just to give you an indication of the heat that his body, at the age of seventy four, has to survive, at the end of his sadhana period his body looks like burnt copper. If you look into his eyes, you will not be able to look straight at him. They are like balls of fire looking straight through you, burning through you.

There are other sadhanas which are meant for different seasons of the year and he is performing all those. Not because he needs them but, in my understanding, to create a tradition of sadhana for the Paramahansa sannyasins, because there has been a decline in the tradition of sannyasa. People have become involved in the fulfillment of ambitions through sannyasa. They want to build empires and they lose the original vision for which they took sannyasa, but sannyasa represents a constant evolutionary process of human consciousness, and, naturally, the purity of the tradition is again being established with whatever he is doing.

This is an opportunity to reconnect with him and with the spiritual direction he is trying to guide us all into. That does not mean that you will be required to sit amongst four fires. You are required to have a vision of what spirituality is and how far you can go.

What is the meaning of Meera and Indrapriya?

Meera means someone who has inner vision. It was also the name of a very famous poetess and saint of India who had a deep union with Sri Krishna. According to the stories about her, at the time of her death her body merged into the figure of Sri Krishna. Every atom vibrated with the divine and merged with the divine. Meera is having that inner vision which leads to the awareness of the divine.

Indra is the king of the gods, like you have Zeus in Greece. It also means master of the senses. There are ten *indriyas* or senses which rule our life. Five senses of action and five of cognition. Normally they rule our body, but when we begin to rule these *indriyas*, we become Indra.

Priya means protector or loved one. So the meaning of the name *Indrapriya* is one who has connection with, or is the controller of, the senses.

What are the qualities needed in order to love and be loved?

Love is something which I have not understood properly and fully. I feel love is not the normal expression which we feel. Sensorial satisfaction of any kind is definitely not love. Emotional fulfillment is not love. Intellectual rapport is not love. Possessiveness is not love. Yet these are the things which we put together and call love.

When we talk of love, we think of emotional happiness and fulfillment, intellectual rapport, sensorial and even sensual fulfillment, and with that the feeling of possessiveness also comes very strongly. All these things combined together give us a sense of external security and create attachments. When we try to project that love to someone else it is always done with some kind of personal, selfish attitude. Please do not mind – I may be wrong, absolutely wrong – but I am only expressing to you my understanding so far. I have never been able to see these three traits as love. I feel love to be something more, a deep unifying force. It is my feeling that there have been very few people in the world who have experienced true love, yet this true love is a force which dominates the entire human nature.

Swami Sivananda, our grandfather guru, used to say there are two kinds of love: conditioned love and unconditioned love. In conditioned love he had many different categories: love in order to gain social status, love in order to gain emotional satisfaction, love in order to possess something and love with many other kinds of descriptions. His description of unconditioned love used to be in relation to an individual and the divine, it gives rise to a universal feeling, affection for everyone, love for everyone and not just for our close and near ones.

It is this unconditioned love which, when we are able to express it, is returned to us a thousandfold. In conditioned love there can be flashes, and then we are again affected by attractions and repulsions. In unconditional love there is only giving, without any expectation of a result, and that is known as Bhakti Yoga. *Bhakti Yoga* is giving the pure nature of your heart to others, and in order to give that pure nature of yourself to humanity and to God, you have to come to that level of perfection.

I received a mantra from Paramahansa Satyananda but I cannot feel that it is mine, I cannot feel that it is part of my being nor practise it intensely. Can you help me to feel this more deeply?

Many times we tend to rationalize the mantra as if the mantra has to conform with our feelings. However if we are trying to feel whether the mantra is suitable for us or not, often the effect of the mantra becomes nil. This is because we are again adding our like and dislike to a particular mantra when the purpose of practising mantra is to take us beyond our normal expressions and experiences of attraction and repulsion. The purpose is to provide one with greater clarity of mind, to awaken the psychic energy within.

The mantras are sound vibrations. Now, many times it happens that if we have a particular fixed and set expression of energy in our own system, when the seed of mantra is planted and the mantra begins to grow, it pushes the fixed and stable state of energy. You know, it is like a seed breaking the ground

as it becomes a plant. So, at that time you feel uncomfortable and you begin to feel that the mantra is not right for you because your fixed pattern is being broken by the effect of the mantra. You begin to feel that something is definitely wrong, “I do not like this, I am not able to concentrate”. Actually that does happen and will happen. The mantra has to break the ground of the mind.

There is a fixed expression of energy which regulates and controls the external world but when we are dealing with the psychic and the pranic and the spiritual level, then these levels do not conform to the external world. The expression of their world is different from that of the manifest world, so that the feeling of not being comfortable with the mantra is bound to come up.

If you expect to receive a mantra with which you will feel very nice and comfortable, then be sure that such a mantra will not be effective. You do not have to look for that feeling, “Do I feel good or do I feel bad?” It has to be a natural spontaneous expression. When you chip a stone to make a statue from the stone – it hurts. If the statue says, “Don’t chip me, I don’t want to be a statue”, then it is just put aside and everyone forgets about it. However, when a nice statue is made, everyone looks at it, admires it and adores it. So, I think as a yoga practitioner you should be ready to chip yourself so that later on you can emerge for everyone to admire, for everyone to see your own beauty.

Please say something about deepening the concept of sankalpa.

Sankalpa increases the sensitivity and the potentiality of mind. It increases the willpower and, initially through a form of positive suggestion, it takes you to the psychic dimension where the mind is sensitized, the faculties of mind have a lot of force and suggestions have a lot of force. In the initial stages, sankalpa is used to focus the mental energies, later it builds up psychic energy. To begin with, externally it may look like a form of auto-suggestion but it prepares the ground for inner harmony. It sharpens the faculties of mind.

I have known people who change their sankalpa every week. There was one Irish lady who said, “This is the only yoga that I like, because I don’t have to do anything. I just lie down, do the sankalpa, and within a week whatever I desire is fulfilled.” Even her relationships with her family and her children went through a very beautiful and positive transformation. The conflicts she was having with her friends were also sorted out.

So, it is sensitizing the mind to deal with the energies within which is the purpose of sankalpa. Also it focuses the mental energies to a point where they become powerful like a laser beam.

Is there a book in particular that you would suggest to us for growth, or a series of books, besides the classical yoga books?

In order to perfect your own practice and to become stable in yoga, I am sure you must have across the book *Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha* which contains the asana and pranayama practices and shows how to perfect them. Also there is the book *Yoga Nidra*, enabling you to perfect the states of relaxation. That will make you go deeper into your subconscious and unconscious and remove any blocks or inhibitions which may be there in order to awaken the potential of energy within you and awaken the chakras.

There are more books, one series is known as *Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati* and another is *Kundalini Tantra*. I think these books should give you an overall concept of the different yogic practices ranging from the body to the level of chakras and kundalini. Then there is another book too called *Meditations from the Tantras*.

How can our yoga practices develop our creativity and our music, etc.?

Meditation has been found to be helpful in the development of creativity. Of course there has to be a systematic process of meditation. The practices of meditation in yoga lead one from an external state of mind to a highly receptive internal

state. In fact one can even say that the entire system of yoga initially aims to develop human creativity. That has been the traditional view of yoga, practices with the aim to develop the potentials of human consciousness. It has also been found that when we practise physical yoga activation of pranas takes place within the body.

People come to yoga for various reasons. Some come to improve the state of their body. Some come to find better health and flexibility, to manage their stress and tension. Some come with high spiritual aims, with a desire to learn meditation. In a group of yoga practitioners we find there are many different goals which they wish to attain through their practice.

Generally, around the world, some practices of yoga have been given more importance. Hatha Yoga is considered to be important by those who wish to get in tune with their bodies because the practices of asana and pranayama have been defined as part of Hatha Yoga. Very few people have been exposed to the traditional methods of Raja Yoga, yet it is one of the most important yogas for people in present day society. This is because in the system of Raja Yoga we find a series of practices which take one from the body to the realization of our inner nature. So in the context of this question I would like to tell you in brief about Raja Yoga.

Raja Yoga is traditionally described as the eightfold path. The first two stages are of *yama* and *niyama* which are codes of external and internal conduct, disciplines to imbibe in life. Then comes the stages of *asana* and *pranayama*. They are to improve the health of the body and the receptivity of the brain. After that comes the fifth and sixth stages of Raja Yoga, the practices of *pratyahara* and *dharana*. In *pratyahara* and *dharana* we focus the energies of our mind and with great concentration we are able to perform optimally using our creativity in life. Then the seventh and eighth stages are *dhyana* and *samadhi*. *Dhyana* means meditation which culminates in the realization of the inner self. The state of that realization is known as *samadhi*. So we find that in the practices of Raja Yoga we deal with four aspects of our life.

First, in the practices of yama and niyama we deal with human behavior and interaction in society. We can say that a refinement of the personality takes place through these practices, thus improving the qualities that we use in our normal life and providing us with a greater sense of stability and discipline. So, the aspect of behavior is managed with the practices of yama and niyama. Second, we have to learn to manage the various imbalances of the body with the practices of asana and pranayama. Third, in pratyahara and dharana, we learn to manage the dissipated states of mind. Fourth, with the practices of dhyana and samadhi we learn to manage the psychic states of our personality.

For the development of any kind of creativity, yoga says mind must be managed properly. The definition of creativity in yoga is giving your best to the action that you are performing at present, in which the beauty, the harmony, the strength, is being projected. This harmony can be used and applied in any stage of life, and with proper application one finds that there is a deep harmony between the action of an individual and the aim which the individual is trying to reach. Disharmony in action, idea and aim indicates lack of creativity so in meditation, or through the meditative process, we try to harmonize these three areas.

I think there is a story of a sculptor, Michelangelo, in which he said, "I do not do any sculpting but I bring out the image that is already in the stone by removing the unnecessary pieces from the stone." Put yourself in his shoes. Would you bring out the image of the stone or would you carve the image of your mind in the stone. Most of us would try to carve the stone according to the concept that we create moment by moment in our mind. Real creativity is not applying one's mind to something but seeing the reality beyond the appearance. When one realizes the real reality and not the apparent reality then that is the expression of total creativity. In order to have that perception, that concept, it is necessary to fine tune the mind.

Imagine what would happen if we turned on the television and saw ten different stations on one channel,

playing all at once. That happens in our mind all the time. Our mind does not normally have the ability to identify the different impressions which are being generated in even one channel of the mind. Therefore the nature of the mind is always of dissipation, there are too many things being observed unconsciously and the faculties are not able to focus themselves in one direction. So, meditation becomes an important process by which we can eventually identify the various channels of mind – and meditation begins with the stage of pratyahara.

Normally when we begin to practise meditation without a clear concept of what meditation is, it becomes a process of imagination and fantasy. However, according to the yogic concepts meditation has to be a process of self discovery. This process begins with extension of the awareness to the world around us and not by withdrawing ourselves from the world and this is where many of us make a mistake. We begin to withdraw ourself from the world without being aware of the influences of the environment. When you extend the perceptions externally there is extension of the faculties of mind into the environment. This extension of faculties is combined with the aspect of complete awareness. When this awareness becomes active in perception and in action, then the meditative process begins.

In the next stage we begin to focus our attention to the point where we can focus the mental energies. In meditation there is a gradual process of training in mental attention and one of these practices begins with mantra. In order to naturally focus the attention on one specific point, yoga suggests the practice of mantra meditation. With the practice of mantra we affect different layers of our personality at the same time.

At one level we are focusing our mind by withdrawing it from the world of the senses which we have identified with, and we are providing the mind and attention with an object or point of concentration. At another level we are also altering the normal state of human consciousness by increasing the sensitivity and the receptivity of consciousness.

At another level we are increasing the harmony of pranas in our personality and these pranas are the energies that govern body, emotions, mind and the subtle nature of our personality. At another level we are also increasing the qualities of the strengths which are inherent within us, such as the ability to deal with tensions and stress, developing the will power, developing clarity of mind, attaining inner states of relaxation and balance. Thus we are providing greater control over normal human actions and reactions, and eventually mantra teaches us how to act and not re-act.

Normally it is the tendency of human beings to react and in this process they never act. We react to the environment, to various influences, to our own expressions of emotions and behavior and to other people's behavior. Reaction is something which is very natural in our life. Action is something which we have never learned, yet. Action is not work or performance, rather it is the harmony which expresses itself externally. Harmony in action leading to perfection is the art of action. In meditation it is possible to come to that level of understanding, and applying that understanding in our normal life leads to enhanced creativity.

So I will suggest that first of all in any kind of yoga practice we should try to increase the level of awareness, not only in formal yoga practice but in day to day routine activities. Include awareness. This awareness will give you, in the course of time, an understanding of the cause and effect of a particular action, attitude or behavior. Later on follow a systematic meditation process in which you do not try to avoid the external situation by withdrawing yourself but are able to evolve a deep understanding of yourself and the environment. Perfection in this state will lead to creativity.

Awareness and meditative understanding are two practices which you can begin with and when you have the opportunity, go deep into the practices of Raja Yoga.

What, in your opinion, are the qualities of a true disciple?

I don't think that there are specific qualities of a disciple, rather it is the use and application of the normal qualities

effectively which makes a person a disciple. This morning I was mentioning that a disciple is not somebody who is a student or pupil of somebody, rather it is a state of mind. Discipleship is a state of mind where there is receptivity, where there is harmony, where there is unity.

This receptivity and harmony is with the self and the world and union is with the concept of guru or God. When these three things manifest in the life of a person, then the nature of the disciple manifests externally and also internally.

One cannot be a musician without the knowledge of music and the effective use or application of that knowledge. One cannot be a doctor without the knowledge of medicine and in order to be a good doctor there has to be application of that knowledge. In the same way, one cannot be a good disciple without knowledge of the link of an individual with society, with nature and with God. Right application of that knowledge takes place in the life of a disciple in the form of receptivity, harmony and a sense of union, of full union, surrender.

Surrender does not mean letting go of your control over yourself and allowing someone else to direct you, rather it is the right application of your knowledge and strength. Imagine that you have to swim across a river. How would you go across that river, against the current or with the current? Normally it would be with the current. When you swim with the current it also helps you to move forward. That is an example of surrender, of letting go. When you begin to flow with life naturally and spontaneously and you are also making an effort to move forward, your effort and the natural flow both together take you to your destination. Your effort is then in harmony with an uncontrolled force. You do not control the force of the water, nor the current, yet you can move with it.

The same principle applies in your spiritual life. Surrender is the harmony of your personal effort with the force which carries you forward. Often we tend to struggle and that struggle creates more mental difficulties and problems. There is a song, "The answer my friend is blowing in the wind". You just have to tune yourself with that to become a good disciple.

How important is it to have a guru in spiritual life?

In my opinion guru is quite important and it is a need also, it is not only a philosophical concept but a real physical need. When I was living in the United States, I found many people who would say to me, "One does not need a guru, one has to realize the inner guru." So I used to tell them, "If you think that the internal guru is enough to guide you in your life, then I am sure you have the ability to live with an internal husband or wife without having any external one. If guru can be internal then husband and wife can be internal and there is no need to have them outside." Just as there is that need for external support, for a sense of fulfillment and interaction, so there is a need for a guru.

I do not see the logic in thinking that spirituality is something internal and that practical life is something external. Spirituality is a part of practical life and practical life is a part of spirituality.

In the traditional systems of Indian thought it has been said that there are four aspects of human life which need to be fulfilled in order to lead a perfectly balanced, healthy, happy and spiritual life. These four aspects are known as *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha*. *Artha* means security, external social, security. This security in society is provided by means of a family, finance, a position of status and respect. Guru also forms a part of this security.

Kama is the second aspect, fulfillment of desires. The desires with which we normally identify are self centered or self oriented and external. At the same time there are deeper desires in the mind which enable one to find peace within. In order to help channel these inner desires and to achieve a sense of fulfillment a guru is needed.

Dharma means knowledge of human commitment to society and to life. We are well aware of our commitments in life because we have been educated and trained that way, but we are not aware of the commitment in life to our own spiritual growth. Because of this unclear concept there is generally a conflict between our moral, religious and spiritual beliefs. That is one reason why we see so much disparity or imbalance

between different thoughts. We also see an imbalance in the human understanding of these thoughts. In order to evolve the concept of a spiritual dharma in one's life, there is the need of a guru.

The fourth aspect, *moksha*, concerns the desire and drive to attain freedom and liberation. In order to guide one on the path of moksha there is the need of a guru. So guru is an integral part and also a need of a human being.

Now we have to understand who can be a guru because we tend to confuse our ideas of guru with the real concept. The literal meaning of *guru* is dispeller of darkness. In this sense the guru is a person who has experienced the different stages of life, who has perfected himself or herself in a state of being, who understands the limitations and potentials of human nature and can inspire you to tread the spiritual path with firm conviction and knowledge.

In this sense the guru is a person who guides you spiritually. Teachers are not gurus. I am a teacher, I am not a guru, because guruhood is something that one cannot attain, rather it is a state of experience. Gurus never say that they are gurus, they are always disciples. There is no ego, there is no label that, "I am". A person who can lead a simple life with clarity of mind and simplicity, and not mess around with the comforts and luxuries of life can be a real guru. They can definitely be in the world but not have a self oriented attitude in relation to things of the world. A guru has universal vision and is able to lend a helping hand to everyone. How to find a guru? Don't ask me! You have to intuitively feel that.

In spite of my enthusiasm, I am not always constant in my willpower to practise. How can one cultivate constancy?

I do not think there is an outright answer for this question because the effort must come from you. You must feel the need and you must have the drive. If you do not feel the need and you do not have the drive, then it will not be necessary for you to practise.

Generally one eats food to satisfy hunger. One drinks to satisfy thirst – and one also drinks to forget the world.

Whatever one does there is a sense of need and a desire to make an effort. If you think that you have a need but you are not able to provide yourself with the proper motivation and drive, then I would say wait for some more time.

Swamiji, please explain to us about singing kirtan as a yoga practice.

Kirtan is part of Mantra Yoga and Mantra Yoga is part of Bhakti Yoga. Although we identify the names sung in kirtan with mythological or historical figures they do not represent a mythological or historical belief or concept. Rather they represent a combination of sounds which stimulate the dimension of vibration in human nature. In fact I have had some discussions with people in India about this.

For example, take the mantra *Om Namah Shivayah*. Now people who have some kind of religious background say that this mantra means “Salutations to Shiva”, but yoga has a different view about it. Yoga definitely predates any kind of religious belief. People ask, “Why do we have to chant *Om Namah Shivayah*? I am not a follower of Shiva, can’t I chant something else?” Then I have to explain to them the yogic viewpoint that mantras are sound vibrations which alter the expressions and the nature of human personality.

In order to explain to you I would like to touch on the subject of Kundalini Yoga in brief. According to the principles and theories of Kundalini Yoga, in our body there are seven chakras. These seven chakras represent centers of energy and dimensions of consciousness and they can be stimulated by different sound frequencies. These chakras have been represented symbolically as lotus flowers with different numbers of petals. If you have seen the pictures or the descriptions of these chakras you will also know that each petal carries with it a mantra, a sound vibration.

A mantra is given according to the level of evolution and according to the need of activation. *Om*, for example, is the bija mantra, or the seed mantra of ajna chakra, the eye of intuition or the third eye. Similarly, the sounds *na-mah-shi-va-yah* are mantras of different chakras in our body. So,

when we repeat the mantra Om Namah Shivayah we are not remembering some mythological or historical figure but we are concentrating on these different chakras. This particular mantra activates the ajna chakra, vishuddhi chakra, anahata chakra, and swadhisthana chakra, that is the eyebrow center, the throat center, the heart center and the sacral center, and the different states of consciousness which they represent.

As part of mantra practice you can either repeat the mantra mentally or you can whisper it or you can speak it or you can sing it. Mental repetition of the mantra takes one into the meditative state. It is the same with the whispering practice. In order to initially get used to the sound one should whisper it. When you become stable in the pronunciation of the mantra you can repeat it mentally. For increasing the sensitivity of the mind whispering and repeating the mantra mentally is suggested.

In meditation, when there is introversion of senses and the mind, many times we become drowsy and sleepy, we lose that self control where we can be alert and aware. At that moment, in order to focus the mind on the mantra, it should be spoken aloud. In order to harmonize the energy field of the body with the state of consciousness, mantras are sung with music.

Music itself has a different effect on the human mind. Hyperactivity can be reduced with the help of music as has been shown in the case of animals and even people. Aggression can be channeled through music and a passive person can be made aggressive through music. Music can definitely alter the states of consciousness, and when you combine mantra with music it becomes a very powerful tool for awakening the entire personality.

Mantras which are sung with music are known as kirtans. Kirtans are also ways to channel one's emotions. Emotions are a very powerful force over which there is absolutely no control exercised by rationality, there is no control of any kind. Emotions represent the raw state of the manifest energy. Fiery energy manifests in the form of fear and depression. Earth energy manifests in the form of deep psychological fear and

insecurity. Air energy manifests in the form of conditioned love and affection. With the chanting of kirtan it becomes possible to eventually change the qualities of these emotions. We can channel them in another direction towards realization of the divine nature, or of God within us.

If it is done properly kirtan can become a very powerful tool to attain that inner realization in a very short time. The force of the emotion raises the level of energy and alters the state of consciousness at the same time, and creates a fusion of the individual with the cosmic mind. Kirtans are used in yoga to give experience of this state. That is the real purpose of the kirtans.

Wales



Yoga in Action & Laya Yoga

Being here makes me happy for many reasons. Firstly because I am back in the U.K., where I grew up, after a gap of fourteen years and I am reminded of how beautiful the countryside is. Secondly because I am here in Satyananda Yoga Centre, about which we have heard a lot in India, and I am seeing all the work which you have put in. Also I can reconnect with Swami Nischalananda who was my mentor in my early days and a close friend. Another reason for being happy to be here is to share something about yoga with all of you. The theme of our meeting here is Laya Yoga and it will be an intense program. Before that I would like to give you a brief of the yoga work that has started. It has taken a new direction which in my opinion paves the way for a new approach to our understanding and practise of yoga.

When our guru Paramahansa Satyananda started propagating yoga, he did so in the early days when people were hardly aware of it at all. He tried to make yoga acceptable to people as a system which can lead to the development of human creativity. For this he strove to bring yoga to the scientific world and to the people in society so that they would be benefitted by yoga practices.

When he left the ashram physically in 1988 a question arose in my mind about what to do now. Because, personally speaking, I wasn't happy about just being a yoga teacher, in fact one could even say that I had had enough of people coming to me and talking to me about their problems. I am

totally unqualified to deal with them. I am not a medical doctor, nor am I a consultant, nor am I an omniscient person who knows the past, present and future. I am a student of yoga, a practitioner of yoga.

However we have to carry on with the mission which was given to us by Paramahamsaji so we started to think about the needs of present day society and how yoga could help people to become better, more efficient, more creative. It came to us in one of his statements. Paramahamsaji has said that yoga is the gift of peace for humanity, and humanity at large has to benefit from it. So we made certain plans to take yoga beyond its physical and cosmetic aspect into something more substantial which could change and transform one's life and understanding. After the convention last year we started some programs with yoga which have proved to be very rewarding and uplifting for all concerned. It is about these projects that I would like to tell you in brief.

New applications of yoga in India

From January 1994 we began to teach yoga, at the request of the government of Bihar, in all the medical colleges as a system of therapy which can be utilized by the medicos to help psychosomatic problems. Out of the nine medical colleges in the state of Bihar we have taken up three so far. Comprehensive training is being given to the students and to the medical doctors so that in course of time yoga can be used as a therapy.

Looking at the results so far I would say that we have been more than successful because the doctors and students of these medical colleges have written to the Indian Medical Council requesting it to make yoga part of the MBBS syllabus. If this training is successful, in all the medical colleges the future doctors will have a very comprehensive understanding of the therapeutic principles of yoga. In the course of time this may even change the method of treating various disorders and diseases.

Seeing the good results of these projects, the government of Bihar, four months back, passed a resolution requiring all

medical professionals within the state of Bihar to undergo comprehensive yoga therapy training and to use it for the treatment of disorders. I am sure you understand the implications of such a resolution. I am confident that in the course of time, first in Bihar, and gradually in the whole of India, yoga will become a part of acceptable therapy just as allopathy is at present. It will not be used only as an alternative therapy, it will have equal status.

Another project which we have begun is reforming criminals through the practices of yoga, more specifically pratyahara and dharana. This project is going to continue in all the central prisons in Bihar. So far we have dealt with three and the results have again been very encouraging. The statistics show that about 38% of prisoners have had a total change of heart and we hope to improve on this.

The third area has been working with the army, not with their physical fitness, but dealing with their psychological and emotional problems especially in high altitude and desert areas where they are isolated from the normal structures of the army and society. We conducted the first yoga camp for the soldiers in what is considered to be the highest battlefield in the world, at 22,000 feet, in the Siachen Glacier which is the border for five countries: India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia and Tibet (China).

The soldiers there go through a lot of psychological problems and pressures, staring at the white blanket of snow night and day for months together. They are totally isolated, there is a lack of physical activity and they get into heavy drinking and meat eating too. We are not against their drinking and eating habits but when they come down later to the plains they get very unruly. So, in order to manage their psychological difficulties we have conducted camps at Siachen, at Leh, Ladakh and also in the desert areas near Bikaner in Rajasthan.

This is an ongoing project which will eventually set up a Department of Yoga in the National Defence Academy where officers and soldiers will undergo a comprehensive training program before being admitted into the various divisions of the army.

The Bihar Yoga Bharati

Bihar School of Yoga has also established the Bihar Yoga Bharati in Munger. It is being officially recognized by the State Government and the degrees given by BYB are in the process of being recognized by the Central Government. In the philosophy department we will be studying, researching and investigating the ancient texts of yoga because there are many techniques and practices which have not yet been brought to light. We are sure that there are many practices that we don't even know exist which are physical, mental and spiritual in nature. So the main thrust of this department will be to investigate the tradition and to bring to light the ancient practices and theories. The psychology department will deal with the management of the mind through the principles of yoga, its techniques and theories.

The Department for Applied Yoga will have sub-departments. One will be Yoga Research; investigation into asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, the techniques of pratyahara and dharana, and the techniques of Kriya Yoga, to actually see what changes happen in the mind, in the psyche. Another sub-department will be Therapy Research. Eventually we hope to standardize the practices of yoga which can be used for the management of different problems and illnesses. A third sub-department will consist of field work, where students will be sent out to gain experience by applying what they have learnt.

These courses will be two years in duration leading to Masters degrees and doctorates. We hope to begin our first session in September next year which is climatically a very good time. After two years a hundred well trained graduates will be coming out from the Bihar Yoga Bharati every year. They, in the course of time, will change the pattern of teaching practically all over the world because until now people have only come to the level of yoga teaching, they have not gained a deep experiential knowledge of the practices. It will give an opportunity for those who are sincerely interested in yoga to further their own understanding and gain some experience.

A lot of work still needs to be done. We are in the process of preparing the rules for admission and examinations, the administrative side of how a university works. Bihar Yoga Bharati is going to have an academic structure combined with an ashram structure and a yoga structure. We are not going to compromise the ashram environment and yogic discipline for the academic structure of a university, they have to go hand in hand. That will be the beauty of the first yoga university in the world.

Village programs

We have also started a program where we go from village to village teaching yoga and we try to help them socially too. So far we have chosen the most crime-infested areas. Two swamis and five volunteers are sent for a period of ten days. In the village they raise a team of volunteers to clean the drains and the roads, to paint houses, to give education in hygiene and to teach yoga. They contact people door to door and find out what their problems and difficulties are, whether they are physical problems or even community problems, and they try to sort them out.

It has been very encouraging because in the four villages that we have gone to, three hundred people have officially surrendered their weapons and have taken a vow not to go the criminal way but to be straight. This is very encouraging, at least in Bihar!

Yoga projects in Australia

Apart from this there seems to be a revival of yoga in different parts of the world as well. I can speak for Australia because we were there for about a month. It was a program in which people gathered after a gap of eleven years and new projects have come up as well.

One is the formation of a holistic medical center in which, under one roof, we are able to offer different therapies such as acupuncture, yoga, shiatsu, homeopathy, ayurvedic treatments and allopathy. People are still working on it and we hope that by April next year we shall be able to launch it so that we

can see a nice combination of different therapies aiding one another to provide total health.

Another project which is under consideration is the formation of a yoga community where karma sannyasins and people who are interested in leading an ashram life while maintaining their families, their jobs and social commitments, will be able to live. They will have their independent homes, it will be just like a village of yoga orientated people. So people are working on the legalities of setting up a yogic community on a farm near a small country town.

Yoga in Europe

Throughout Europe there seems to be a change in the pattern of people's attitudes in relation to yoga. There is going to be a gathering of people interested in education in France where leading educationalists will be discussing the role of yoga in modern education. Of course the drive, the desire to know yoga in depth is also there.

Whatever has happened is a lot for one year, and this shows that there is definitely an increase or change of consciousness in people's own understanding and application of yoga. One thing which we have to realize is that it is not important how much we know, it is important to actually practise the correct application of our knowledge in our lives. It is not important to increase the knowledge bank but it is necessary to know how to apply what we already know correctly and creatively. It is in this direction which yoga is moving.

In Wales this process begins with the course in Laya Yoga. In brief, Laya Yoga means the yoga of dissolution, of dissolving. Laya means to dissolve and then we add the word yoga which means harmony in dissolution. It is a practice in which we become in tune with our personality and we are thus able to eradicate dissipations in our nature and improve the quality of our personality.

Laya Yoga

According to the theory of Laya Yoga, within our own consciousness there is a black hole and there is a white hole.

The black hole is the area into which all our creativity, all our potentials are sucked and we cannot use them. We have the energy, we have the potential, we have the ability and strength but they are being sucked into the black hole of mooladhara. This potential has to surface from the white hole of vishuddhi in the realm of human consciousness.

So, in order to perfect Laya Yoga it is necessary that we work with two chakras, mooladhara and vishuddhi. How and why? That you will know tomorrow but we can say that in the Laya Yoga tradition we have to initially work with all the chakras because this is the last stage, where our consciousness dives into mooladhara and emerges at vishuddhi with greater creativity, with greater harmony, balance and light. In order to complete this process there has to be a comprehensive understanding of all the chakras, the tattwas and the states of consciousness related with the consciousness.

Generally it has been our experience that we talk of chakras and energy at the level of the awakening of energy. We speak of the awakening of prana, the awakening of chakra and the awakening of kundalini. The entire theme of the discussion in Kriya Yoga and Kundalini Yoga revolves around the awakening of energy with very little emphasis on the awareness of the changes that can take place in consciousness. Laya is a system which makes us aware of consciousness as well, so it compliments the practices of Kundalini and Kriya Yoga by bringing a balance both in the prana and in the structure of consciousness, thus making our practice a more complete one.

Opening Meditations for Laya Yoga

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Guna Rahita Akasha

Make the body upright and straight, hands on the knees or in the front wherever comfortable. Breathe in deeply and chant om three times with me, then the shanti mantras are to be repeated.

Please remain seated for a few moments, quietly.

Become aware of the environment around you. Become aware of the silence in the environment and also within your body and mind.

Complete awareness of the whole body from the top of the head to the toes.

Observe the state of your body internally.

Know how you feel inside. Observe the states of comfort and discomfort, heaviness and lightness, tension and relaxation.

Be aware of the entire body internally, from the head to the toes, observe your whole body.

As you observe the body be aware of the feeling of stillness, motionlessness and silence.

You can move your body at any time but do not be distracted by such movement. Maintain the awareness of silence and stillness within you.

Now, observe the flow of the natural breath.

Observe the flow of the natural breath within the nostrils. At the time of inhalation and exhalation the breath moves up and down within the nostrils. Focus yourself on the movement of breath within the nostrils.

At the time of inhalation you will notice a slightly cool sensation within the nostrils and at the time of exhalation you will notice a gentle, warm sensation. The temperature of the breath changes at the time of inhalation and exhalation and the temperature can be felt within the nostrils.

Awareness of the cool and warm sensations at the time of breathing in and breathing out. Focus your attention within the nostrils.

Now try to find out which nostril is active. Breath is flowing in which nostril – right or left or both?

Know which nostril is open and flowing and become aware of the swara.

We breathe in and out normally but the mind or the consciousness observes through which channel the breath is flowing in and out and that is the knowledge of the swara.

If the breath is flowing in and out more freely through the left nostril you will know that ida flow is active. If the breath is flowing in and out more freely through the right nostril you will know that pingala is active. If the breath is flowing through both the nostrils you will know that sushumna is active. Concentrate on the swara and the process of inhalation and exhalation.

Once you have identified the swara, become aware of the state of the body, the brain, the emotions, the mind, the consciousness. Try to find out whether the qualities of the flow, the swara, are manifesting in the body, in the brain, in the mind, in the emotional structure, in the psyche or not.

If ida is flowing then the qualities of ida will manifest in the form of introversion, in the form of passivity or relaxation.

If pingala is flowing then the qualities of pingala will manifest in the entire personality. You may experience vitality, mental dynamism, alertness or even dissipation, diversion of mind, diversion of attention.

If sushumna is flowing then you may experience inner harmony, silence, peace and bliss.

Become aware of the predominant guna, the quality, affecting the entire personality. The quality of ida or pingala or sushumna which at present is dominant within you. Observe that.

You have to realize the nature, the state, of qualities manifesting within along with the swara.

At the time of ida the nature of the states manifesting within the body and mind are tamasic. Tamasic in the positive sense, not in the negative sense. Tamasic in the sense of passivity, introversion.

If pingala is flowing then the states of physical and mental experiences will be rajasic: dynamism, vitality, alertness.

Observe the guna of the different flows, of the different swaras.

If sushumna is flowing then the guna or the inherent quality is sattwa. You will experience harmony, peace, stillness and silence. Awareness of the swaras and the gunas which are at present manifesting in you.

And now we are going to observe the space of the body. Experience space from the top of the head to the toes, pervading the entire body internally. Focus your attention, focus your awareness on space. From the top of the head to the toes, observe the inner space.

Keep moving your awareness from one direction to the next and experience the vastness of space within your own body.

Normally when we begin to focus our attention, all the experiences happen in the space of the head. In this practice you have to move your awareness from the head down into the whole body and have the vision of space pervading different parts of the body internally.

Move your attention from the head space into other parts of the body.

As you observe the space pervading the entire body you will notice that some colors manifest naturally in the form of streaks of light, colors, shapes, figures, shadows moving, continuously moving.

Observe the predominant colors. Normally we see a mixture of colors but among them are some which stand out.

These colors represent the predominant guna in the body.
Now focus your attention in the region of the heart center.
Complete awareness of the heart center and there visualize a tiny flame which is known as chaitanya jyoti.
Chaitanya meaning the eternal, the conscious; jyoti meaning light, flame.
Complete awareness, total awareness of the chaitanya jyoti, the eternal flame in the region of the heart.
Merge the entire consciousness with the flame. Experience the luminosity of the flame within.
The light from the flame fills the entire inner being.
Total identification with and awareness of that inner flame.
Merge yourself inside the flame. Merge yourself with the flame – the whole body, the whole mind, the whole brain – experience the luminosity of that flame.
Breathe in and chant om three times with me.
Experience your body internally.
Slowly externalize the mind and open the eyes.

Before we begin the next part, I would like all of you to please stand up, don't talk to anyone and in absolute silence walk one hundred steps. It is not an ordinary walk. As you walk, move your entire vision and awareness from the head space down to the soles of your feet. With each step feel the contact of the soles with the ground and the pressure and the sensation. As if your entire awareness is concentrated on the soles of your feet. One hundred steps and then come back, in absolute silence.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

The practice of meditation which we have done has been a technique of Laya Yoga but in order to understand it properly you should know the theory of it.

Laya Yoga and Kundalini Yoga

The word *laya* means to dissolve – dissolve what? The manifest nature has to dissolve with the unmanifest nature. This dissolution is actually seen in the form of

transformation of the normal patterns of consciousness and the development of the transcendent nature. That is the purpose of *Laya Yoga* and it is a complimentary practice to Kundalini Yoga.

Yesterday I mentioned briefly that in Kundalini Yoga we concentrate more on the awakening of pranas, chakras and stimulation and purification of the tattwas than on the aspect of consciousness. The aspect of consciousness is not negated but definitely neglected. Laya Yoga emphasizes the awareness of consciousness so that we become aware of the changes taking place in that dimension. The ability to observe and control the experiences in the field of consciousness gives one the ability to eventually harmonize the pranic awakening, the awakening of chakras and the kundalini.

Kundalini Yoga is a tantric practice and Laya Yoga is a vedic practice, that is the only difference between the two. In the practices of tantra a lot of emphasis has been given to energy, to feeling, to sensitizing the awareness in order to experience the movement of prana shakti. Laya Yoga aims to sensitize the awareness in order to experience the consciousness.

Five akasha or states of consciousness

The states of consciousness that Laya Yoga talks about are related with the chakras in the form of akashas. *Akashas* are known as spaces. In the normal yogic system we become aware of *chidakasha*, the space of the head, during the practices of pratyahara and dharana. *Hridayakasha* is the space in the heart. *Daharakasha* is the space in the lower regions of mooladhara and swadhisthana. Laya Yoga says that within every chakra there is experience of consciousness in the form of space, and different states of consciousness have been defined which one experiences with chakra awakening.

There are five spaces which we talk about in Laya Yoga, five states of consciousness that we deal with. The state of consciousness related with mooladhara is *guna rahita akasha*: *guna*, attribute; *rahita*, without, *akasha*, space. *Param akasha* is the state of consciousness in swadhisthana. We will be dealing

with these two practices today so let me explain the basic principles of these two spaces.

I had mentioned before that the final practice of Laya Yoga is to dive into the black hole of the manifest dimension and re-emerge through the white hole of the manifest dimension. The black hole is represented by mooladhara chakra and the white hole by vishuddhi chakra. Why is mooladhara considered to be black and vishuddhi considered to be white? We shall look at this first before trying to understand the states of consciousness which are experienced with the awakening of chakras.

Sahasrara and ajna: the transcendental dimension and the seed of manifestation

In the normal course of evolution the cosmic energy has manifested symbolically from sahasrara to mooladhara. *Sahasrara* represents the pure dimension where the interplay between energy and consciousness happens at a transcendental level. There only these two forces remain in union. The nature of energy is pure and the nature of consciousness is pure, free from every kind of attribute, free from every kind of influence, free from every kind of name and form, beyond time and space.

In the process of evolution, energy passes through certain changes represented in the form of chakras. *Ajna chakra*, the next one below sahasrara, represents the individual mind, the birth of individuality. It is an area where the natural parts of energy and consciousness begin to manifest in the dimensions of time and space, the tattwas, the elements; the seed has been planted for their growth.

Five chakras from vishuddhi to mooladhara

Vishuddhi chakra, the one below ajna, represents the first element, space. Space has been considered the basis for the growth of every other element. There is a statement in the Upanishads which says that *Brahman* is space, *Kham Brahman*. Now, Brahman means the evolutionary force, something which is expanding and contracting and the nature of

expansion and contraction is seen in vishuddhi chakra. The entire evolution of humanity, whether material or spiritual, happens in the dimension of space. If you look at the manifest world around us, trees and buildings go up in space, the body grows in space. Similar growth also happens in the spiritual dimension because space contains infinite possibilities of growth and it supports the nature and the growth of the elements too.

Anahata chakra represents the next element, air, a denser form of the same energy. Similarly *manipura*, representing the fire element and *swadisthana*, representing the water element, are progressively denser forms of the same energy. *Mooladhara* represents earth, the final, solid form of that same energy.

It doesn't matter that the entire potential of energy has restricted itself. It has come from the divine to the ridiculous. Matter represents the total potential of the cosmic energy. There is concentration of that cosmic energy in one grain of sand, in one atom, so you can imagine how important matter is in every respect. The concentrated form of energy is matter, the expanded form of energy is space and the transcendental form of energy is in sahasrara.

Direct from mooladhara to vishuddhi

So, the condensed final form of energy is mooladhara and the expanded form of energy which supports the tattwas and the consciousness is in vishuddhi. Mooladhara also has the immense potential to draw one's energy and to propel one to emerge from vishuddhi by bypassing the other chakras. There is a link between mooladhara and vishuddhi which is discussed in the other yogas.

If you can practise the mooladhara sadhana with total control over yourself you don't need to pass through the other chakras. You can come to vishuddhi straight away provided you are able to handle the nature of mooladhara. Just as energy has manifested in the form of tattwas, elements, from space to earth, so consciousness has manifested in the form of akashas. Akashas are different dimensions of space and consciousness in these chakras.

In mooladhara chakra the element is earth; that represents energy, and the akasha is guna rahit akasha, the space without attributes. Now this has to be understood properly. How can there be space without attributes? There are two aspects, the positive and the negative. The gunas are qualities, we can even call them the genetic qualities of the universe. There are three gunas: sattwa, rajas and tamas. In the negative sense, and most of us take these gunas in the negative sense, tamas is something to avoid, rajas is something to overcome and sattwa is something to be attained but that is a wrong concept.

Three gunas

Gunas have their positive nature and their negative nature. In the negative aspect tamas will manifest as inertia, lethargy, dullness, procrastination, states where the mind becomes totally dull and has no feeling of vitality or dynamism. In the positive sense, tamas represents passivity, harmony, stability, motionlessness, stillness. In meditation we try to become motionless – we are trying to experience the positive tamasic state. We try to become peaceful, we try to feel the harmony, we try to become balanced, we try to fix ourselves in one pattern of experience.

Rajas in the negative aspect is dominance, aggression, possessiveness, selfishness. In the positive aspect it is creativity, vitality, movement of energy and consciousness in the form of creativity. Sattwa, which is so much aspired for by everyone, is something which we have never experienced in life because sattwa is a combination. Sattwa is the harmony of tamas and rajas. It is not purity or harmony which is to be attained by an effort. It is something which comes up spontaneously and naturally after you have come to a point of harmony and balance within yourself, in the manifestation of tamas and rajas. Externally we may desire, and experience at times, the spontaneous nature of our personality which can make us feel that we are experiencing sattwa. However most of the time human beings move between the states of rajas and tamas, rajas and tamas, rajas and tamas.

The state of inner luminosity is sattwa. Imagine that there are many lights burning in this room and we turn off all the lights except one and we see how far the radiation of that light illuminates the room. Then we turn on another one. Can we separate the light of one from the other? No, there won't be a demarcation between the light of this bulb and the light of that bulb. Physically they may be two things but the light will be one. In the same way tamas and rajas represent two bulbs. It has to be our effort to change the quality of the expression of tamas and rajas. When they are both functioning creatively, then sattwa emerges. So the guna rahit akasha, the state of consciousness where the attributes have to be transcended, is the first stage of Laya Yoga.

Prerequisites for Laya Yoga

How are these attributes transcended? One has to perfect, prior to the practice of Laya Yoga, the states of pratyahara and dharana. That is the first requirement. Meditation is not that important but perfection in pratyahara is of utmost importance. Don't go for higher and cosmic and divine experiences in meditation because in the normal pattern of mind I don't think it is that easy to attain such experiences.

There is one story I like very much of Paramahamsaji. He was asked at one time, "Is it possible to attain self realization in this lifetime or not?" The answer he gave was, "No, it is not." So he was again asked, "This means that all the practices that we do which claim that they will provide us with realization, are all telling lies?" He said, "No, they are means to prepare the body, brain and mind for the state of realization which comes naturally after you have purified yourself. All practices are means to attain that end. What we know as realization, or believe to be realization is a transcendental state which cannot be experienced by an untranscendental mind, body, brain and being." So the direction of these practices is to provide you with the ability to convert the nature of your personality, to change the nature of the body, the brain, the mind and the emotions, the feeling, the sensitivity, the creativity, so that you are one

day able to express the transcendental consciousness. Now, if you see that this is true and you agree with it, then we definitely have to work on the nature of our personality. For this pratyahara and dharana are very important.

Pratyahara and dharana: extension, withdrawal, focusing

Before one practices pratyahara there has to be an extension of the senses in the outer dimension. Normally the concept of pratyahara is withdrawal of the senses but before you can actually withdraw yourself from the world of name, form and idea, the world of the senses, you have to become aware of the attractions and repulsions that exist and which influence the attitudes, the behaviors, the performance, the interactions, every passing moment. So in pratyahara there is extension first and when you have gone to the maximum limit of your extension then you begin to withdraw.

Traditionally they describe the state of pratyahara as being like the turtle withdrawing its limbs into the shell. Now that is a very apt description. Two arms, two legs, one tail and one head, these are the six limbs that the turtle withdraws into the shell. Two arms, two legs and a tail represent the five senses, the total senses not the division of the senses in the form of karmendriyas and gyanendriyas but the total senses which manifest in the external dimension. The head represents mahat composed of the four faculties of the mind: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara.

If we are able to follow this concept of pratyahara, by the time we attain perfection in pratyahara there will be a good control and creativity manifesting in the level of the senses and the mind: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. There will not be distractions, the energies will be focused, the consciousness will be awakened, it will be an aware consciousness and then the state of dharana will come.

One pointed attention, one pointed concentration is *dharana*, where we hold the state of creativity of the senses and the mind and do not allow that experience to dissipate. So, the practices of pratyahara and dharana are to be perfected prior to the practices of Laya Yoga.

The experience of guna rahita akasha

One should try to become a person of action and not a person who reacts. Throughout our life we have always reacted and never acted. We react to the environment, we react to different stimulations and influences and there has never been positive action from our side to contribute to our growth towards harmony internally or externally. One needs to have the ability for action, to go beyond the aspect of reaction, and then the practices of Laya Yoga can be experienced most effectively. In the guna rahit experience which relates to mooladhara we begin to observe the gunas which are manifesting first in the body, then in the mind, then in the expressions of our consciousness. There are some basic practices which make us aware of this change happening within.

In the guna rahita akasha meditation we did before, we began with the awareness of breath in ida, pingala and sushumna. *Ida* is related with the tamasic state, the state of withdrawal. *Pingala* is related with the rajasic state, vitality, dynamism, activity. *Sushumna* is the harmony, the balance, the purity related with the sattwic state. With the flow of a swara, the quality of the guna in the body also changes. As we gain control over the flows of breath through the practice of *Swara Yoga*, we can also control the effect of the gunas on the human personality. If somebody is tamasic this can make them rajasic; if somebody is rajasic this can make them tamasic. Please don't take it in a negative sense, it has to be understood in a positive sense; this is to provide balance in order that sattwa can be generated.

Another part of that meditation practice was going into the inner space. If you observe the colors which are being generated naturally, spontaneously, in the vision of space, the color which is most predominant represents the guna which is predominant in the body. Mooladhara and swadhisthana are represented by a yellow square and a white crescent respectively. If you are able to see predominantly yellow and white colors then that means that tamas is active.

Now here you might wonder why white and yellow, because tamas has always been represented as black, but please

remember that we are looking at the states of consciousness in the space of the chakras which are being influenced by the gunas. We are not looking at the states of energy which are being influenced by the gunas. In the states of energy the color combination changes but in relation to human consciousness we go with the color of the tattwas. Yellow and white indicate tamas. If red, orange and bright colors are predominant, that means rajas is active. If subdued colors, blue, grey, or black, then sattwa is active at a higher level. This is how we are going to judge the state of consciousness being influenced by a particular quality or guna.

It is possible to change the predominant guna also through visualization and concentration practices, where you change the colors in your mind. In the course of time, with perfection in the practice, you will notice a big difference in your own expressions and attitudes and behavior. All the colors merge their luminosity into the image of the jyoti in the heart. Concentration and meditation on the jyoti is the *nirguna dharana*, which means concentration on the formless attributeless space. This is the same as the guna rahit akasha state of consciousness.

Balancing the instincts

The negative side of this consciousness is increased sensual urge, the need for sensual fulfillment. You know that is a typical mooladhara attribute. In the tradition they speak of four basic instincts: *maithuna*, the sensual, the sexual instinct; *bhaya*, fear, insecurity; *ahara*, craving, desire for self fulfillment and sustenance with which to nurture oneself; *nidra*, the desire to disconnect from the world of the senses at the time of overload.

The aspect of maithuna manifests very strongly in mooladhara. Similarly, the aspect of bhaya, fear and insecurity is in swadhisthana, the aspect of ahara, the desire to sustain and nurture the body and life is in manipura, and nidra in anahata. Of course some yogis say that nidra is also an aspect of swadhisthana but Laya Yoga says that nidra is an aspect of anahata negativity. We shall deal with why Laya

Yoga has assigned these instincts to different chakras later on, but it should be remembered that in the perfection of the guna rahit akasha meditation we eventually aim at bringing about a balance in the instincts related with mooladhara chakra.

Now we will move into the meditation practice related with swadhisthana or the param akasha so please sit down comfortably.

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Param Akasha

Sit down comfortably, spine erect, head straight, hands either on the knees or in the front, wherever comfortable. Gently close your eyes, adjust yourself, make yourself comfortable.

Try to maintain one position for at least fifteen to twenty minutes but if at any time you feel the need to move the body you are free to move quietly, slowly and silently so as not to disturb your own state of concentration and awareness. Complete awareness of the body.

We are going to practise param akasha dharana. Para means super, akasha means space, and param akasha has been described as the deep dark space which is being illuminated by starlight.

Internalize your attention. Withdraw your mind from the external environment and focus yourself initially in chidakasha, the space in front of the closed eyes, the space of chitta. Complete awareness of chidakasha.

While holding the awareness in chidakasha become aware of your whole body internally. Observe areas of comfort and discomfort in the body. Tension and relaxation. Move your attention from one part of the body to the next. Observe the whole body.

Gradually move away from the experience of the physical body. Disassociate yourself from the experiences of the body. Say to yourself mentally, "I am not the body nor am I the experiencer of the states of the body". Withdraw yourself completely

from your body. Do not identify with the body and with the experiences of the body. Even if you definitely itch try not to identify yourself with it.

I am not the body nor do I identify with the experiences of the body whether they be of comfort and discomfort, pleasure or pain, relaxation or tension, happiness or sorrow.

Just like a driver sitting in the car observes the whole car, in the same way you have to observe your body. It's a vehicle.

Disassociate yourself completely from the body. Expand your consciousness which is normally contained in the body outwards. Be aware of the space, the param akasha, and focus at one point in param akasha in front of the closed eyes in chidakasha, on an image, on the symbol of a tiny twinkling star.

Fix your attention on the symbol of a star. Dark space, the space representing consciousness and a point of light, a twinkling starlight, representing the luminous nature of consciousness.

Do not identify with the body at all. No matter how much discomfort you may feel or pain you may feel, do not identify with the body. Remind yourself again and again, "I am not this body nor am I the experiences related with the body and I am not affected by the physical experiences of pain and pleasure, comfort and discomfort".

Maintain your awareness fixed on the symbol of a tiny star, twinkling star in param akasha.

Observe the mind and gradually disassociate yourself from the mind and mental experiences. Disassociate yourself from thoughts, desires, feelings, sensations. Say to yourself mentally, "I am not the mind nor am I the experiences of the mind".

Be aware of space, expanding awareness merging with space. Be aware of the luminosity of a twinkling star in the distance and take that image, the symbol of the star, down into your body to the level of swadhisthana and fix it there.

Now you are not concentrating in chidakasha but on swadhisthana and the symbol of the twinkling star in the dark space, param akasha.

Do not identify with the body nor with the mind. Do not identify with either physical or mental experiences. Be aware of the expansive nature of space within, which is expanding.

Keeping the attention fixed on the symbol of the star we will be chanting short oms. With each om feel the vibrations beginning from the star symbol in swadhisthana and gradually expanding outwards, pervading the whole param akasha.

Please listen once and when I ask you begin at your own speed. With each chanting you have to feel the vibrations expanding and filling up the entire param akasha, maintaining the awareness fixed on the symbol of a twinkling star. Do not identify with the body nor the mind nor with any of the physical and mental experiences, just remain aware of symbol, space and the vibration. We begin.

Om Om Om Om Om . . .

Slowly begin to identify with the external world, the environment, the sounds, the sensations, the body.

Chant Om three times and Shanti Path.

Hari Om Tat Sat

The second practice is of param akasha, which has to be visualized in the form of a dark black space with a point of light in the center like a twinkling star. Now we will practise concentration on maha akasha which is connected with manipura chakra and the sun.

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Maha Akasha

Close your eyes. Sit down comfortably, spine erect, head straight. Breathe in deeply and chant om three times then Shanti Path. Please remain seated comfortably, keep the eyes closed. Become aware of the body. Awareness of the different parts of your body. Practise khechari mudra, gradually turning the tongue back so that the back of the tongue touches the upper palate and the tip of the tongue is pointing backwards towards the throat. With khechari mudra combine ujjayi pranayama, practise a slight contraction of the throat muscles so that at the time of breathing in and at the time of breathing out there is a soft, gentle hissing sound.

In this practice gradually lengthen the breath. Do not strain yourself but be comfortable.

Focus your attention on the sound. Try to focus your attention on the sound that is being generated in the practice of ujjayi pranayama.

Feel the breath in the throat region. When your tongue gets tired in khechhari then you can release the tongue, relax for a few moments, for a few breaths, and then again practise khechhari mudra.

Merge your consciousness with the sound of breath. The deep and gentle sound of ujjayi takes the form of consciousness.

Slowly and gradually go on increasing the length of the breath. Let it become deep, gentle and relaxing. In this process of khechhari and ujjayi there should not be any physical discomfort. Focus yourself fully on the sound that is being created in ujjayi breath. Slow, deep, gentle breathing.

Now to this practice of khechhari and ujjayi we are going to add the technique of shambhavi mudra. Please listen to how it will be done.

We will be lifting our heads, allowing the head to fall back, so we face the ceiling. In this posture the head should be comfortable and restful. Once the head has gone back we will be opening the eyes gently and focusing the vision at the eyebrow center while continuing with the practice of ujjayi and khechhari.

When the eyes cannot remain open any longer, then we will be closing the eyes and gently allowing the head to come back to the center, relaxing khechhari but continuing with ujjayi breath. When we have relaxed then we will again practise khechhari, taking the head back, shambhavi mudra, holding the posture as long as possible comfortably, then again closing the eyes, bringing the head back to center, releasing khechhari and continuing the breath in ujjayi.

We shall practise five rounds. Begin slowly.

At the end of each practice feel the deepening relaxation and focusing of attention. Feel the lightness of the body.

Practise gently at your own pace, without straining yourself. Five rounds.

When the five rounds are over be steady and comfortable. Release khechari. Stop ujjayi. Maintain the eyes closed and deepen the awareness of inner relaxation and one pointedness. Develop awareness of akasha in the body. From the head to the toes. Observe the space, deepen the awareness of relaxation. Be aware of the space. Develop a total experience of the body containing nothing but space.

The body is to be experienced like an empty shell containing nothing but space, the symbol of consciousness.

Within the shell of the body, within the space, is energy. Do not allow the mind to wander, just the experience of energy pervading the body space and nothing else.

There is no mind, no thoughts, no desires, no feelings, no sensations. You are one with the feeling of space, the feeling of expansive nature.

Just the experience of energy, the experience of energy pervading the entire body. And the energy is vibrant. It's luminous, filling the space with light, filling the whole space of the body with light, intense light.

We are practising maha akasha dharana. Maha akasha has been described as the bright space, luminous space which exists in the center of the sun. Light radiates everywhere. There is no other experience but of light. You have to awaken the feeling, the awareness of luminosity in the inner space, pervading the whole body.

The whole individual identity has to dissolve in luminosity. Nothing but light. The body has to dissolve in light, the mind has to dissolve in light. The gross, the subtle and the causal consciousness dissolves into light. Merge the entire awareness into the infinite light of luminosity.

See yourself engulfed in surging waves of illumination. Gaze internally into the vast sea of vibration and luminosity which extends in all directions as far as the inner eye can see.

Awaken the inner faculties of consciousness to experience luminosity within. Vibrant, radiant.

Pure energy radiating into infinity.

Let every type of ego-binding simply fall away. There is no binding, there is no bondage in this space. The entire being

becomes one with the surging waves of luminosity.
Go deep into the experience of light which is vibrant, which is luminous, which is pure. Bondage has no meaning at present. Be aware of the infinite expanse of light.
Intensify the vision, awareness, and total experience of light. Like a ray of the sun, gradually draw your awareness back from the periphery to the source. The source of light in manipura chakra. Intensify the awareness more and more. Go to the center, the source of luminosity, of vibrant light.
The experiencing awareness becomes one with the consciousness in the form of light.
Experience the intensity of light within the self-effulgent space of this void. The entire awareness is engulfed by the radiant shining space of maha akasha. This is the vision you have to experience in all of its luminosity and splendor.
Experience the space. Perceive your entire being as being one with the luminous space of maha akasha.
Continue with this practice for a few moments more. Immerse yourself more and more. Every passing second intensify the awareness of light, waves of light, radiant all around.
Now, breathe in and chant om three times.
Bring your awareness back to the body, the external environment. Become aware of the solidity of the body.
Slowly and gently open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat

Visualization

In all these practices of Laya Yoga a great emphasis has been given on visualizations and visualization is the final stage of dharana. Initially when we begin to visualize something we go through a process of imagination and that is due to the dissipated nature of mind which is known as *vikshipta*. Yoga describes various states of mind beginning with *mudha*. *Mudha* means the dormant or confined, bound state of mind. Just like a vine entwines itself around a tree trunk, this state of mind, when linked with an object, is unable to separate itself. There is deep attraction, deep involvement which does

not allow one to stand back from the experience and observe it passively, objectively, with the attitude of a *drashta*, a seer. You may even say that mudha people have tunnel vision, they can only see through a tube and become disturbed when the tube is removed and they begin to see other things.

Then vikshipta is the dissipated nature, jumping from one thing to the next without being able to focus on something, without being able to give total attention to something. Yogis have even said that yoga begins with the vikshipta state, not the mudha state. In the mudha state there is no hope because there would be absolutely no acceptance nor understanding nor any form of realization. There would even be strong rejection of anything that changes the normal pattern of sensory experience. So yoga always begins with the vikshipta state in which the mind jumps, the attractions are many. Because of these inner jumpings, diversion of attention, diversion of the faculties of the mind, there is a tendency to overload the mental structure and the emotional structures. The first indication of this overloading is in the form of stress.

Working through this vikshipta state, yoga comes to the *ekagra* state, the state of one-pointed attention. It is here, in that one-pointed attention, that dharana is experienced. When we begin our normal practice, we are not able to visualize something, we are not able to see it as clearly as we could with the eyes open. It has been found through experience that as the attention focuses itself on the object of concentration, the image on which we are concentrating gradually takes a shape, a form.

First an outline can be seen of an image or a symbol. Later on that outline is filled with different shades of colors. It is hazy, and then in the course of time, with the deepening of concentration, the image or the symbol can be seen very clearly. That is the state of visualization which yoga means to achieve. To make something visual, not imaginative. In fact the word visualization means to be able to see the image, make it visual. In the practices of Laya Yoga visualization plays a very vital role because it is in the process of visualization that

we are able to alter the states of consciousness. Visualization also stimulates or awakens the vibratory dimension of our psychic personality.

Vision plays a very important role in the manifest world and also in the unmanifest dimension. If we close our eyes, immediately a lot of information will be cut off from the brain. Sixty percent of the stimulations we receive are visual in nature, then comes auditory and then the other senses come into play. So when we block out sixty percent of the input from the brain the faculty of vision has to develop internally. This development of inner vision gives one the ability to eventually alter the pattern of consciousness by focusing the will, the attention and the dissipated energies of the mind.

This focusing of will is seen in the practices of param akasha and maha akasha, the second and the third practices which we have done. In the param akasha we were supposed to visualize a point of light in absolute dark space. You are supposed to go where no man has gone before. Discover the new frontiers, that's a bit of Star Trek thrown in. The intensity of concentration will eventually naturally and spontaneously propel one through to maha akasha where the concentration and total consciousness was able to dive into that point of luminosity, the star which is eventually experienced in the form of the sun. That is the description of *maha akasha*. *Maha* means great and *akasha* means space. These names simply represent a state of consciousness in which the mind begins to go from an external identification to an inner experience. External identification of a star becomes inner experience of the luminosity within the star as the consciousness evolves naturally from swadhisthana.

Mooladhara and maithuna

Now we come to the point of instincts because it is not only the consciousness which has to change but also the instincts which have to be refined and channelled. The instinct related with mooladhara is termed the sexual instinct, the maithuna instinct. Unfortunately every object in the created universe is

geared to stimulate this particular instinct. It is the need, the primal desire of every individual including God. Please don't mind it, for it was God who started this. In the Upanishads we hear a statement that God had the desire to become many from one, *Eko'ham bahusyaamah*, "Let me be many from one". This primal desire represents the urge of creation and continuity and the entire created universe is geared to fulfill this need. Every action, every look, every interaction, every form, every image, creates an attraction.

This attraction in yogic terminology is known as *raga*. In fact it has been defined in the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali in a very beautiful form. *Raga* is something which brings pleasure and *dvesha* is something which brings pain. Attraction and repulsion, pleasure and pain, *raga* and *dvesha*, these are the two natures, or we can even say, these are the two realities of the manifest dimension.

Being the original desire, this instinct is one of the most powerful ones and it has to be channelled in the right direction. The tantrics have suggested that the energy of this instinct, which is downward flowing energy, has to be reversed. This flow of energy, when reversed, creates transformation or change in the biological structure and in the psychological structure of the human personality. The attitude to and awareness of the effects of the instincts plays a very important role in channelling these instincts.

It has also been the experience of people who have gone deep into the practices of *kriya* and *kundalini* in order to channel their energies, that at one time, with the awakening of *kundalini*, the sensual, the sensorial, the sexual desires become very acute and sharp. When we fall in the negative side of this instinct then there is bondage, there is limitation of human perception, but when we come to the positive side of the instinct there is upliftment and sublimation of energy.

This sublimation, in *Laya Yoga*, is done through the process of observation. When the instinct becomes dominant or active, when the desire becomes powerful, the main thrust is not to fall prey to the force of the desire of this instinct. One should maintain an awareness that the desire is creating

changes in attitude, behavior, actions, emotions and in the thoughts of an individual. Through a meditative process the changes which are affecting the human personality are balanced. This is through *viveka* and *vairagya*, *viveka* meaning discrimination and *vairagya* meaning not being influenced by the power of raga, being non-attached. I'm not using the word detached. Attachment, detachment and non-attachment; attachment is correct English, detachment is correct English, non-attachment is not so correct English but it conveys the meaning. Attachment is two poles of the magnet coming together and creating a binding force, a unifying force. Detachment is forcibly pulling the two pieces of the magnet apart. Non-attachment is allowing the magnets to remain together but not being bothered by the power or the strength, so I like to use the word non-attachment here.

Let the body follow its nature yet be aware of the nature of the body. Allow the mind to follow its nature, let the thoughts and emotions follow their nature, but remain aware and allow *viveka*, discrimination, to guide you in the right direction. When discrimination is not there it becomes very difficult to deal with the force of the instincts.

Swadhisthana and bhaya

The second aspect of the natural instincts is fear, insecurity. Fear of the unknown, of change, is *bhaya*. *Bhaya* is an unconscious fear, it is an unconscious state which relates to *ahamkara*. Please remember that I am not using the word ego. *Aham* is individuality, the concept of 'I' and *akara* is the form, the shape, the dimension in which individuality manifests itself. That dimension is the unconscious. There are conscious expressions, there are subconscious expressions, but the main expression of individuality is in the unconscious dimension.

In the conscious dimension the expression of individuality is tamasic by nature: self oriented, self motivated, self centered attention and awareness. In the subconscious dimension the nature of individuality or *ahamkara* is rajasic: satisfaction,

the desire to attain the highest status and position in life, the drive and motivation to outshine and outdo other people, the tendency to be on top. In the unconscious dimension the nature of ahamkara is sattwic. Why?

The unconscious has also been known to be the center where the natural karmas and deep samskaras manifest which guide human interaction and behavior. When we go into the unconscious dimension and actually encounter samskaras and karmas in our life, when we come to face them, then at that moment a deep insecurity arises. There is fear of change, fear of letting go of something with which we have identified. There can be expectation of adopting something new and good, positive and creative, but that expectation of something good and positive is overshadowed by letting go of what we have known to be a part of us.

Just to explain this point and make it a bit clearer, I find that many spiritual aspirants or practitioners have this innate phobia of renouncing, of *tyaga*. They think renunciation is something very difficult and impossible but actually renunciation or *tyaga* or letting go of an attachment is a very simple and natural process. We tend to identify with leaving something which belongs to us whereas in spiritual life, in yogic life, one does not have to let go of anything.

Imagine that you are climbing some steps. Do you leave the step on which your foot is before you actually put the other foot on the next step? No. Normally a step is taken, a higher level is attained, then naturally and spontaneously the lower level is left. In the same way, in spiritual or yogic life there is no renunciation, only attainment. It is this attainment which makes you drop the unnecessary items of life spontaneously and naturally.

So even in the management of insecurities that are, we can say, psychic, because they belong to the deepest, unknown layer of our personality, the insecurities represent the unconscious fear of letting go. It is this fear that has to be overcome by observation and, once again, by viveka, discrimination. The Adi Sankaracharya gives an example in a very poetic form. At night we see a piece of rope lying

on the ground, and in the absence of light we think that the rope is a snake. Intense fear is generated, the whole physical mechanism gets ready to fly from that place. You don't even run, you get wings growing on your feet. But if there is light, even torchlight or candlelight, any light which can make you aware that what is lying on the ground is not a snake but a rope, then the fear will not come.

We carry the torch in our pocket and walk around in the dark. Viveka, the ability of discrimination, is always there in our pocket, but we never use it. Because we are not using viveka we confront our own fears and insecurities, and that creates a lot of psychological and emotional tension, difficulties and problems. The management of fear, the natural instinct of bhaya, represents the management of swadhisthana awakening through viveka, by shining that light on the object or the moment of experience.

Manipura and ahara

The third instinct, *ahara*, is related to manipura and concerns craving, nourishing, nurturing, sustaining. The body is nurtured with food. Just as the body is nurtured and maintained by the food that we eat, the mind and spirit also require a different kind of food. Mind is nurtured by pleasure or pleasures. As long as you find them there is no question of suffering or sorrow or unhappiness. The spirit also needs nurturing with food but food of a different kind, it is not pleasure, it is spirituality.

There is a process of elimination too which we tend to forget. What we eat and digest, we assimilate, and the remnants are removed from the body but that never happens with the mind. We are constantly feeding the mind but there is no excretion from the mind and because of that our mind gets constipated or sometimes it has diarrhoea. Blocks, tensions, conflicts, whether psychological, intellectual or emotional, these different mental states tend to manifest as blockages of the natural mental faculties.

So in order to manage the instinct of ahara one has to learn how to eliminate too. In the body it is a natural process; we eat,

digest, assimilate and then remove the poisons from the body. The mind is fed with pleasures, after assimilating the pleasures how can we remove the poisons of the pleasures? This happens with the process of *antar mouna* which is, generally speaking, observing the thoughts. Then there is another practice, *antar dhyana* which is observing and channeling the desires. It is the same process as *antar mouna* but works with the desires which represent the nature of craving, of *ahara*.

Anahata and nidra

The fourth instinct is *nidra* or sleep. Why has it been defined as an instinct? *Nidra*, or the state of sensory disconnection, is a natural process of life. We did not learn to sleep at night and be active during the day. It is a natural process which allows the psyche to release the tensions which it accumulates due to an overload of sensory, sensual and external inputs.

What happens when you are tired? The mind stops working, the brain becomes fuzzy and hazy and there is this desire to go and rest. It is automatic introversion. In states of chronic overload, no matter where you are, you will fall asleep. So it is a release valve of nature which allows the inputs from the manifest world into our personality to be controlled.

This *nidra* is supposed to be eventually transcended, meaning that one should have the ability to manage the inputs from the manifest dimension which are affecting, altering and influencing the various states of our personality so that in five minutes you are as fresh as ever. *Yoga nidra* is the sleepless sleep in which one is neither awake nor in deep sleep. One is aware yet disconnected from the external environment. When we attain this level of understanding the interaction of the sensory world with human nature, the instinct of *nidra* can be overcome.

Managing instincts through subtle observation of vibration and tattwa

These four instincts are very powerful forces in one's life. Even in normal meditation we find that people are dozing off, there is no control over the process of introversion. So

we can understand how difficult it is to control that state of introversion in the practices of Laya Yoga when combined with the practices of kundalini. Then these instincts come to the surface of consciousness and at that time you have to be super alert to deal with them energy-wise and at the level of consciousness because the interaction of energy and consciousness is a very strong combination.

The observer, the *drashta*, has to be even stronger than the forces which control the body and mind and therefore it is necessary that the power of visualization be awakened to its fullest capacity. Only through the power of visualization can we control the manifestation of energy by controlling the vibratory field of our body. It is only through the power of visualization that we can eventually control the altered states of consciousness by, again, controlling the vibratory field of our body. The vibratory field of the body has the ability to control the energy experience and the consciousness experience because this vibration, known as *spandan*, is at a level beyond the *tattwas*, where the *tattwas* which represent the interaction of energy and consciousness are in a primordial state.

Now we go into the *akasha* practice in which we have to experience the different bodies of the *tattwas* in order to know their nature, behavior and function.

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Tattwa Akasha

Sit down comfortably, spine erect, head straight, hands on the knees or in the front wherever comfortable. Gently close the eyes. Complete awareness of the whole body in the posture in which you are sitting.

Observe the physical state of the body.

Make sure that you are not disturbed by the states and conditions of the body.

Remain relaxed, comfortable and at ease. Relaxed body, alert mind.

Become aware of the stillness that pervades the entire body. Observe the state of silence which is being experienced within. Stillness and silence.

We are going to practise bhramari pranayama, by plugging the ears, inhaling deeply through the nostrils and, at the time of exhalation, making the humming sound of bhramari pranayama with the awareness fixed in the center of the head at an imaginary point where the two fingers which are plugging the ears would meet if you had nothing inside. Five rounds of bhramari pranayama. Start.

When you finish the five rounds, gently bring the hands down. Maintain the eyes closed and focus in the center of the head at the point where the vibration was being generated. Continue to feel stillness and silence within you. For a few moments just focus yourself within yourself.

Complete awareness of the whole body.

Now imagine the earth element, and merge your awareness into the earth element. Become one with the earth element. The identification with the earth element should be total. Through any process of imagination feel yourself to be one with the element earth. Become the earth. Experience the solidity, the denseness of the matter throughout your being.

The whole body has become part of the earth element.

Go deep into the experience of the earth element.

Develop this experience. When this experience manifests in the body consciousness, the finer, the subtle qualities of earth can be experienced.

At a certain point, as you go deep, you will lose awareness of the physical body altogether and feel as if another body has come into existence. This body is of earth.

Center your entire awareness within this experience.

Become the earth. Experience the solidity and denseness of matter. Merge your consciousness with the consciousness of the earth.

Now become aware of the water element. Become aware of the water element and all the different forms of water, in clouds, in mist, in a drain, in a stream, in a river, in a lake, in an ocean. Immerse your awareness in each of these water forms so that

your consciousness becomes one with the bodies of water to the exclusion of all else.

You are the water element. You are the ocean, the still lake, the gurgling stream, the flowing river, the clear spring. Merge the entire consciousness with the water element to the exclusion of everything around you. Feel the nature, feel the quality of the water element within you, totally.

Maintain the drashta bhava, the attitude of an observer, and be one, merge your consciousness with that of the water element. Experience the water form, fluidity.

Now change your attention and go into the fire body. The tejas sharir, the body of fire, and experience your entire being as forms of fire.

The element of fire which exists in all the forms of fire from a candle flame to the fury of a volcano, the dynamism, the warmth, the nature of fire. The consciousness has to merge with the consciousness of the fire element.

Go deep within yourself and experience the element of agni. The consciousness has to become one with the element of fire, agni. Intensify the experience. Every passing moment, be intensely aware of the merging of your consciousness with the consciousness of the element that is being visualized.

Now become aware of the air element in all its forms from a gentle cooling breeze to a still atmosphere, to a raging storm. Feel the nature of vayu. Merge your consciousness with that of the air element.

Now identify with space.

The deep infinite space. Develop the microcosmic experience of space and once you are able to fully experience the microcosmic state, develop the macrocosmic experience of space. With full control over the faculties of mind, develop the experience of akasha and merge your consciousness with that akasha.

Continue this practice for a few moments more.

Experience your expansive nature.

Experience the expansive nature of the akasha tattwa.

The nature of the akasha tattwa is to be experienced in the form of vibrations. Vibrations in each and every part of the

body. Vibrating, the entire being, the entire body, the entire molecule, the entire atomic structure, vibrating, pulsing. The entire cosmos, vibrating, pulsating. The entire space throbbing with life, with energy, with consciousness.

The space, the akasha tattwa, holding the potential of creation and dissolution within itself, merge your consciousness with that of the akasha tattwa.

Intensify the awareness. Exclude everything else from the mind, from the zone of attention. Just be aware of space.

Inhale and chant om three times.

Slowly externalize the attention. Become aware of the external environment. Bring back your attention to the body. The normal body. Move your body and gently open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat

Satsang

Swamiji, can visualization modify manifest reality albeit within a limited environment? If so could it create an alternative reality?

It can definitely create an alternate reality. I don't doubt it, but in order to explain it to you I will have to say a few words.

We have programmed ourselves. Our brain and our thinking are programmed, our mind is programmed and our ego is programmed. The entire personality functions as per the programming and this programming is very peculiar in nature. Just to give you an example, it becomes difficult for a Hindu to visualize Jesus. It becomes difficult for a Muslim to visualize Krishna. It becomes difficult for a Christian to visualize Rama. What does this mean? We can imagine it definitely, we can create an image but it doesn't come naturally, it doesn't come spontaneously.

Why? Because of whatever, but the main reason is this programming of the brain, the mind, the emotions and belief. All our life we function as per this programming in our inner computer. When we learn how to visualize, then at that moment we are changing the programming of our mind and personality in total because we are gaining the ability to go beyond our normal concepts, images and ideas and willfully create another. When this visualization manifests itself in real life, in a real form, in actual colors, then that is darshan.

Darshan means vision, the actual manifestation of the image – whatever that may be, according to our faith and

disposition. It has been stated many times that in the life of a disciple the guru can manifest physically. Now if the guru can manifest physically, we attribute that to the ability of the guru but what about the ability of the disciple to perceive that manifest form of the guru? It is not only the guru and it is not only God who has the power to manifest, it is also the natural ability of the disciple to perceive that manifestation which comes with the development of visualization. Therefore in the final stages of visualization one can definitely create an alternate reality and that alternate reality will be actual for the person who is experiencing it.

If we look at it in another sense we can also say that the fine tuning of our inner nature can lead us to experience something which normally, in the three dimensional world, the world of name, form and idea or time, space and object, may not necessarily exist. Just because it does not exist in the manifest world does not mean that the mind hasn't the ability to actualize the vision or the concept that it can create within itself. There can come a time when, by the focusing of will, it even becomes possible to materialize that mental image and give it a physical form. There have been siddhas in history who have had this ability of materialization.

So, the ability to visualize can create an alternate reality because it sensitizes and harmonizes the mind and the energy.

My question is about the order of the chakras. I'm not asking about what suits me, I know which one corresponds to my condition, I'm asking about a textual contradiction from the root tantric texts. In Saundarya Lahari the position of the manipura and the swadhisthana chakras are reversed. Why did Sankaracharya do this?

The chakras in every text have been represented in their present sequence: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna, sahasrara and there is an accepted understanding of the chakras as well. When Sankaracharya was composing *Saundarya Lahari* he was not concerning himself with the sequence of the chakras. In that composition he was

following the attributes of Shakti and he was composing the attributes in a poetic form.

Even today, according to our concepts or according to our inspiration, we can compose a poem or use prose which may not necessarily follow a sequence. *Saundarya Lahari* does not actually give the sequence of chakras, rather it represents the manifestation of the divine in its various aspects. Not only has manipura come after swadhisthana but within the text other theories have come after ones which should have come before. We should understand it is just a poetic description of Shakti and not a sequential description of Shakti, to keep it simple.

Could you please tell us about possibilities of healing through sounds and music?

Healing is definitely possible through any medium and to begin with we should realize this – provided we are able to create synchronization, harmony and balance, in the environment within us and in the person to be healed. This is because the problems, diseases and ailments which we face are nothing but a state of imbalance in our life.

In fact I don't have to explain to you the meaning of the word disease. As a natural law the body, and I don't mean the physical body only but the entire spectrum of human existence, should be in balance, in harmony, in tune with itself and with the environment. That is the law of nature but due to our highly evolved intelligence we always tend to disrupt the natural laws and create disturbance in the natural ease of body, mind and spirit. This disturbance in the natural ease of being, in the natural state of being, assumes the form of disease.

Yoga believes that the moment we are able to harmonize the disruptions of our personality, again that same ease will be attained which is an indication of total health. The ability to attain total health is our inherent ability although we have become dependent nowadays on external mediums to obtain health and wellbeing.

Traditionally, if we look back into antiquity, we find that the therapists were well versed in treating physical, mental

and even spiritual problems simultaneously, but somewhere in history we began to specialize in the treatment of one aspect only. We isolated the therapy of mind and spirit from the body. In fact in the remains of many of the ancient civilizations we find special people, we have a few examples even in the tradition of *ayurveda*, who treat not only the body but the entire personality. We must understand that harmony is the key to health. If we are able to create and transmit this harmony it is possible to heal not only oneself but also others. So-called pranic healing is one example of how prana can be transmitted from one person to the next.

Even music therapies have come up nowadays which can heal other people just by creating a pattern of vibration in the body and altering the physical condition. Of course this is a very big subject but I think we can believe without any doubt that healers must have the ability to move energy in their own being first and then have the ability to transmit it through sound or by prana or by any other means.

Please talk about the sadhana that leads me to the practices of Laya Yoga. When is the time to start with these practices and when is it better to leave them?

Because you have been involved with yoga practice my answer to you will be different from what it would be for other people. So please don't get confused with what I'm saying in answer to this question now, or when I come again you'll be saying, "But you gave us the wrong sequence."

As practitioners of yoga we have not had complete but only partial experience of various yogas, including pratyahara and dharana. Most of us, in meditation, can become aware of the different states which we are experiencing internally without getting caught up in the rationality or in the intellectual analysis of the practices or techniques. So, for those of you present here, keeping in view your own involvement with yoga, I would suggest that as part of meditation practices every day you can include just ten or fifteen minutes of Laya Yoga's preparatory practices, which are what we have been doing. Combine it with asana, pranayama, mantra practice,

japa practice, mudra, bandha, yoga nidra and other practices of pratyahara such as trataka and antar mouna. Right towards the end of the sadhana you can incorporate the ten to fifteen minutes of preliminary Laya Yoga.

So that it is not confusing for all of you the sequence which we have been following has been from the book *Dharana Darshan*. There is a chapter on the pancha vyoma dharana, called Vyoma Panchaka Dharana. *Vyoma* means space, it is another word for akasha, *pancha* is five – so we have the dharana of the five spaces. In this chapter different techniques have been described progressively in order to take one through various preparatory stages before actually embarking on the final practice of Laya Yoga. So practise it towards the end of your sadhana and don't get lost in space.

Could you please talk about Paramahamsaji's present life?

That's a tall order, I'll have to begin a few years back. When Paramahamsaji took sannyasa from his guru Swami Sivananda the aim of sannyasa in his mind was to know the reality about which everyone talks, and which is written about in scriptures which are spread all over the world. At the time of sannyasa he was given specific instructions. He was told that for a few years he had to work to exhaust his samskaras, his karmas, his desires and the ambitions which represent human nature. Before establishing himself in a state where he could experience the expanded consciousness it was necessary to exhaust the pulls and attractions of samskaras and karmas.

He asked Swami Sivanandaji, "If that is the case, then can I lead a normal life in society, keeping my aim in front of me, and exhaust my karmas that way?" Swami Sivananda said, "No, because the moment you involve yourself in society you will not be able to live the spirit of sannyasa and your efforts will not be to exhaust the karmas and samskaras, rather you will accumulate more because the awareness will be self centered and self oriented." Therefore the path of *nishkama seva*, selfless service, was prescribed for him with the clear

instruction that when he had come to the point of exhaustion he would feel vairagya towards everything, no interest towards anything in life.

This actually started to happen towards the end of 1981 and this feeling of disinterest became very strong in him towards the end of 1982. That was the time when he came to the United States and, for the first time in my life, I saw him withdrawn. He was not a person to go through withdrawal states like we do. He was very much withdrawn and introverted, in a thoughtful mood. He gave the programs because he had to, otherwise there was absolutely no interest. I'm telling you my personal feeling when I saw him in this state because I hope it will give you a better insight into what he is doing now. I'm sure that you might have also felt some change during that period. He spoke to me in Puerto Rico during a function at I.Y.T.A., to which he had been invited. He said, "I want to leave everything now. I have absolutely no interest in anything. I'm thinking about some changes which will change the structure of the yoga mission and my life." At that time we could not understand what he was thinking or contemplating.

In 1983 he renounced the presidency of Bihar School of Yoga. I don't know what made him choose an ignorant person like me, because I had not lived in India since the age of ten, I had lived abroad all my life. I was mothered by Swami Pragyamurti, I was mothered and fathered by Vasishta and Arundhati in Newcastle. I had played football with Swami Nishchalananda in Belfast. You know, I was a totally new person in India – a foreigner in my own country. I felt like a stranger in a strange land.

Within a week he decided to leave the ashram and he went to Australia. He spent six months there and I was sitting in Munger wondering what was happening. Then he appeared in India for about a week, took another flight and came to England in 1984. So even before he left the ashram there was absolutely no contact with him. I had requested that he teach me to use the tools of the trade but he needed his own space, his own time to see in which direction his life was moving into.

Ultimately he relented and said, “Okay, I’ll give you five years and teach you what there is to be taught.”

On 8.8.88 he left the ashram physically. When he left the ashram it was a very peculiar leaving. Just a week before we had celebrated guru poornima, and during that function, which was one of the best which we have ever had with him, he gave his heart to everyone. He was glowing and radiating, dancing, laughing and singing. People knew that something was afoot because it was like he had thrown open the doors of his heart and was saying, “Come and take whatever you can.”

People knew something was going to happen but nobody expected that within a week he was going to leave. Only two days before he called a few of us and said, “I have decided to leave on such day.” It is not our dharma to enter into discussions with him as to why, but of course we all prayed very hard that the day which he had mentioned would never arrive. Unfortunately that was not to happen, and he left on the morning of 8.8.88, with only one jhola in which he carried two dhotis. He took a sankalpa, “I will not see anyone with whom I have come into contact after establishing the yoga movement. I will only contact those people who were my friends before I took the sankalpa of the yoga mission.”

He wandered around the awakened pilgrimage places in India and eventually he came to Trayambakeshwar which is a very important place of Shiva. *Trayambakeshwar* is one of the twelve jyotir lingas and it is also the name of the temple in Maharastra. That image is also the *ishta devata* of Paramahamsaji. There he lived in a *goshala* alone, practising intense sadhana with only one question in his mind, “What next?” He got an answer.

It was raining, in the middle of the night, when he had a vision in which he got the answer. Later he said it was an instruction from his *ishta* to go to the cremation ground of Shiva which is in the Deoghar region. He framed another question, “What will I do there?” After a few days he received another instruction, “Do *nama smarana*, remembrance of my name with every breath, that is your aim now.”

The way in which he came to Deoghar is also an interesting story. Paramahamsaji had never been to that region before but he described the land from his vision and the physical description of the land is exactly as you see Deoghar today. When he was beginning his search for the land to establish himself there, Swami Satsangi went to Deoghar. Deoghar has a Shiva temple. She went there after roaming around with the prayer, “Let the wishes of my guru be fulfilled.” When she came out, a pandit who was looking after the temple asked her, “Why have you come?” She said, “I have come here looking for some land for my guru.” The pandit said, “Well, I know of some which is for sale, come and see it.” That land fitted the exact description which Paramahamsaji had given. The owner said, “Only this morning I decided to sell it and you are the first person to come along asking for the land. It’s yours, take it.” Possession of the land went through very smoothly. All the paperwork was finalized without any trouble in a very short time, something totally unheard of in the bureaucracy of Bihar.

Paramahamsaji also received the guidance that he had to live the life of an avadhoota, so he wrapped up his geru dhotis, in a bundle with his watch and malas, went to the temple and placed them near the image of Shiva. When he was blessing them near the image he suddenly remembered that in 1962–63 he had gone to the same temple and received a set of instructions to propagate yoga. Now it was in the same place that he was receiving instruction, “Leave your mission, go and do your sadhana.” So he went to Deoghar.

When the news got round that he had settled there, people started coming from all over to see him. He had to be very firm and strict with them, saying, “No, don’t come to see me. Consider that I am dead for all of you.” Of course because of our emotional attachments we all felt neglected and many people felt many things but the idea of what he had to do was very clear in Paramahamsaji’s mind. He explains that there is a blackboard on which we keep on writing until the time when it is necessary to wipe out everything so that other things can be written on it. The impressions in his mind had to be

wiped out and for this reason he had to go into self imposed isolation and not see anyone for many years. During this period of isolation he started practising higher Vedic sadhanas which had been told to him by the acharyas of our sannyasa tradition. One of the requirements was, “Stay away and have nothing to do with your disciples.”

This has all been written about. The sadhana which was prescribed for him was *panchagni*, the sadhana of the five fires, *anusthana*, constant remembrance of God through mantras, *mouna*, absolute silence, *ekant*, total isolation without seeing anybody, and other sadhanas for the different seasons.

Now just to give you a hint of the different types of sadhana which he performs. Panchagni sadhana begins from the 16th January and continues to the 16th June. For six months he has to sit in between four fires which are only about two feet away from his body and the fifth fire is the summer sun. The temperature inside, where he is sitting goes up to 80–85 degrees Celsius in the middle of summer. And there he is, sitting with his eyes closed for eight hours. That is the sadhana which he has to do.

I couldn’t work out why he was doing it. I asked him once, “What is all this? Why do you have to do all this?” He said, “You read *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, this sadhana has been given there.” Panchagni was the sadhana Parvati performed in order to obtain Shiva. It was done by the wife of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sarada Devi. In the entire history we have come across five or six names, including Dattatreya, the founder of the Paramahansa Avadhoota tradition, who have performed panchagni.

When I started reading the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, panchagni sadhana has been described in the last chapter. When you have the opportunity, you can read it also. It is described as an atonement for the sins committed in life. So I asked Paramahamsaji, “What is this atonement for?” He said, “For my actions, in case at anytime I have committed the sin of thinking that these actions were mine, for then I have committed a sin. A person never commits an action which he can call his own. They are always guided. Especially

a person who has surrendered and who is being guided by a higher nature. Many times, in times of success the feeling comes that, 'I have done it'. If that has happened in my case then I have to atone for those sins. The sins of karmas being performed with ego."

Then I came across another passage in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* which said that only those people can actually perform the panchagni, and retain sanity and clarity, who have overcome the basic tendencies and instincts. *Kama* is passion, *lobha* is greed, *mad* is ego, *moha* is attachment and *matsarya* is negative tamasic possessiveness. So an idea flashed into my head, "Well, I'm also a sannyasin. Let me try just sitting underneath the sun." While Paramahamsaji was performing his sadhana one day, I sat about a hundred yards away from him underneath the midday sun, and after that I had such a splitting headache and I was sick for three days.

That was a moment of great revelation for me. Personal revelation, that a person who can withstand the heat of the Indian summer while surrounded by fires, and can sit there totally oblivious to what is happening around him, must have reached a higher state of mind. The fires actually burn his body. When he comes out from the sadhana his body is like burnt copper, glowing red.

In winter he has another sadhana which is a midnight sadhana. He wakes up at 12 o'clock and takes a bath in cold water, outside under the sky, performing his *mantra japa*. The sadhana which is prescribed changes according to the season and time, according to the *muhurta*. This is the external form which we perceive.

After thinking about it and seeing the results in the life of Paramahamsaji, it seems that these sadhanas have brought out in him the abilities of a siddha: control over the natural elements, control over the body. These sadhanas are known as austerities. They are not passive yoga sadhanas which we do every day, they are really hard austerities which only have one aim – to make the personality strong, to make the mind strong, to give one the realization of the tattwas and to give one the ability to control the nature of body and mind and

even the environment. I personally believe this to be true because I have seen some things happen which would not normally happen to anybody.

Paramahamsaji has never left the periphery of the Alakh Bara. One day when he had completed one type of sadhana he called the four or five swamis who lived in his vicinity at that time, and I had the opportunity of being there also. He said, "I have been instructed to provide my neighbors with the same facilities that I have. I don't have the facility or money to provide my neighbors with these things and therefore I am entrusting you to fulfill this instruction." With the help of Sivananda Math, which is the organization for social development, we decided to work in that region of Deoghar for the upliftment of the poor. It is one of the most backward and poorest regions of the country.

Our approach to the work there is first to provide shelter for each family. We make a four bedroom house with a kitchen, simple toilet, a boundary wall and a tube well, and we donate it to the family. The cost of each house is about twenty thousand rupees. We use rammed earth construction, mud bricks and a thatched roof. Its a beautiful construction, five star. In fact those of you who will go there in November will be able to see them. We make our own bricks. We have recently acquired two brick making machines which make compressed earth bricks, sun dried. Outside we give a plaster of cement so that it can stand up to the weather.

On another day, Paramahamsaji got up from his sadhana and called Swami Satsangi. He told her, "Look, there is a village nearby where there is a woman who is an invalid. She has six children, her house is burnt down and she is sleeping underneath a tree. Go and help her." It took Swami Satsangi three days to locate the village and that person whom Paramahamsaji knew about from just sitting there. That lady could not use her hands. Her eldest son was twenty years old and the youngest was six. Her husband had died. The house had burned down, they had had nothing to eat for three days and they were living under a tree. The monsoon was coming so we reordered our priorities and built a house for her.

Apart from providing shelter to a family through Sivananda Math, as a second priority we provide employment to the eldest of the family so that they have a regular source of income, even if it is four hundred rupees a month. We also provide education to the youngest member of the family and medical aid to each member of the family. These are the four projects of Sivananda Math in that region.

One lady came to the hospital that we have opened in Deoghar, where we see an average of two hundred patients a day. She was suffering from abdominal tuberculosis. The doctors there told her they had no medication. The hospital is about five hundred yards away from Paramahamsaji but the moment the doctor said, "Sorry, no medication", Paramahamsaji got up from his place, called a swami and said, "Stop that lady!" He called the doctor and he said, "You have to give her some medicine. How can you refuse?" The doctor was trembling in her boots, she couldn't believe that he had known what had happened. She said, "But Swamiji, we don't have any medicine." He said, "Give her three aspirin." She said, "Aspirin? For abdominal T.B.?" He just said, "Do as I tell you! Three aspirin with instructions to take one each day."

Three days later the lady marches in and after the check up they found there was no trace of abdominal T.B. When the doctor came to tell Paramahamsaji he said, "I don't want to see the doctor. She can't enter this area." There are things which we can see which happen every day and which really makes us wonder what is happening. We have no answer to it. Really, we have no answers. When we see things like this happening we definitely begin to feel that Paramahamsaji is in tune with what is happening around him and is helping in his own way. You can say God is working. You can say God is channelling his energy, whatever, but things do happen.

This year he has completed five years of his panchagni sadhana. Before he takes a sankalpa of how many years of sadhana he has to do, at our request, because we always get requests in Munger, "When can we see him? When can we see him?", he said "Okay, I'll keep one month free and during

that time those who want to see me can come.” I feel that it is a good opportunity to go and see him, not because of him but to reconnect with the spirituality which he is trying to inspire you with. If we can imbibe even one percent of what he is trying to give us we will have a very great inspiration to guide us through our lives.

Many things have happened in other dimensions as well. He called his place the *Shri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara*. *Alakh Bara* means invisible boundary and in fact the traditional ashrams were Alakh Baras in remote places where there was absolutely no access to the public, very much like this place. Of course it is possible to come here now but imagine in the absence of roads and cars wanting to come here from London on a mule’s back, or walking. That’s how the ashrams used to be when they were known as Alakh Baras. Later on they became integrated with society and were known as ashrams but the tradition is of the invisible house where higher spiritual sadhanas can be done undisturbed and uninterrupted.

It so happened that in the sannyasa tradition there are seven acharyas. They accepted the Paramahansa Alakh Bara as a new order which would give people the concept of the highest vedic principles of tyaga, vairagya, sadhana and so forth, so without any effort, and without him even desiring it the Alakh Bara came to be recognized as the eighth order of sannyasa. It is definitely changing the concept and the tradition of sannyasa. Even in India people are accepting the spirituality of sannyasa more and more and I feel that Paramahamsaji is just being an example of how far a person can go in spiritual life.

It is better that you form your own opinion and understanding about what he is doing and what he is trying to infuse in other people.

Concepts and Theory of Laya Yoga

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Loka Dhyana

Adjust yourself so that you can be comfortable and without physical tension for at least twenty minutes.

Let the body relax.

Observe your body internally from the head to the toes.

Center your awareness in your body and be aware of the state of comfort and relaxation.

Breathe in deeply and chant om with me three times and then the shanti mantras.

Become aware of the space within the body.

Feel the body to be an empty shell and within the empty shell is the experience of space extending from the top of the head right down to the toes.

Continue observing the space within the body with total awareness. Gradually drop external identification, external awareness of the environment and the physical body. Intensify awareness of all-pervasive space.

Constant and continuous awareness. Go deeper within yourself, within the space of the body.

As you identify more with space and less with the physical body there will be a sensation of floating, of inner silence and stillness.

Be aware of the sensation of floating. Gradually disassociate yourself from the dual experiences of comfort and discomfort, aches and pains, states of relaxation and ease.

Simply be aware of floating in inner space.

Feel the motionlessness and silence of the space within.

Continue.

The space which is being experienced is consciousness.

Be aware of the field of consciousness.

Do not identify with the senses or with mental experiences, thoughts or emotions. Just observe the field of consciousness.

Only awareness in the form of an observer, the sakshi or drashta.

The drashta or the seer, is a part of individual perception, the observer which represents individual perception.

Observe, witness the field of consciousness extending in all directions of the known manifest universe and the unknown unmanifest universe.

We will chant continuous short oms with each exhalation.

Feel the vibrations of the mantra throughout the entire space of consciousness in the physical and subtle dimensions.

Om Om Om Om Om . . .

Be aware of the vibrations in the space of consciousness.

Remain silent and observe the play of energy, whether it be harmony or disharmony, observe the play of energy within the field of consciousness.

Focus your awareness in the region of mooladhara and observe that center of energy glowing, radiating.

Intensify the awareness of the energy of the mooladhara chakra.

In the dimension of consciousness it is represented by bhuh loka.

Explore the space of your consciousness in bhuh loka. It is not the energy play of mooladhara chakra which concerns us, experience the space of your consciousness in bhuh loka, the counterpart.

Now focus your awareness in the region of vishuddhi and observe it, luminous, radiating light. In the field of consciousness this center is known as janah loka.

Observe the space of your consciousness here, beyond the play of energy, the space of consciousness.

These are the two centers in the space of consciousness, the bhuh loka and the janah loka, which you should now observe. Observe the space of consciousness within the two chakras, observe the lokas.

Be aware as you move your consciousness between bhuh loka and janah loka. Bhuh loka represents the dimension of consciousness in the world of matter and janah loka represents the dimension of consciousness in the world of space.

Explore these states of consciousness.

Now we will stop this practice.

Return to awareness of the space which pervades your whole physical body.

Become aware of the body as an empty shell.

Slowly become aware of the solidity of your physical body.

Become aware of your breath. Feel the movement of the breath, be aware of the different parts of the body and gradually begin to externalize your awareness.

Be aware of the external surroundings, the external environment.

Breathe in deeply and chant om three times with me.

Rub the palms of the hands together and gently place them over your closed eyes, and then slowly open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat

In the practice which we did today we were supposed to evolve the awareness of mooladhara and vishuddhi chakras. Mooladhara is a unique and very special psychic center which holds immense possibilities and power to either totally bind or to propel the human consciousness into other dimensions so that it passes through various transformations and eventually establishes itself in the fixed reality of the self.

Satyam and ritam: eternal and transient realities

Yogis have described two forms of reality. Reality is not one. One is the changing, transforming, evolving reality known as *ritam* and one is the fixed permanent eternal reality known as *satyam*. In the manifest world we go through the ritam aspect of life; our body grows, from the time of our birth until the time of our death it goes through a process of change, continuous

transformation. Along with the body our perceptions and our faculties also go through a continuous process of change and this change is seen in the experience of the chakras.

Mooladhara, at the lowest level, combines both experiences of ritam and satyam; the fixed and the temporal experience. Other chakras don't have this ability. Other chakras represent transformations and the progressive nature of energy whereas in mooladhara the energy has come to rest. The resting point of the energy represents the fixed reality and we can even give the example of a tree here. The roots of a tree are firmly entrenched in the ground, they do not sway with the wind which affects the outer surface. The roots are strong, firm, unmoving – that is the causal nature, the causal body. On the surface, as the trunk thins out and divides itself into branches and as the branches thin out and they grow leaves, one can feel the movement of the wind, the branches and the leaves sway with the wind. This is the potential of mooladhara, one part represents the fixed reality where energy has come to rest in the form of solidity, in the form of matter, while the manifest experiences of matter go through change.

The same type of potential for evolution is in vishuddhi chakra because *vishuddhi* represents the doorway between the cosmic and the manifest in the form of akasha tattwa. The centers above vishuddhi, including ajna, also represent other doorways which propel one into other dimensions of experience.

Mooladhara and vishuddhi in Laya Yoga

In this practice of Laya Yoga we have to mainly deal with the two chakras: mooladhara and vishuddhi. In mooladhara we are going to the source of the fixed form of energy – where there is absolutely no movement. That is where the consciousness has to become stable, unaffected by the forces of the wind moving in the material, manifest dimension. The moment there is the state of silence, quietness and peace in the level of energy, the moment the human perceptions are stilled, that energy propels one to re-emerge from vishuddhi with a new life – it's a river of life.

People who have perfected Laya Yoga have been able to control their life force and, in some cases, even rejuvenate their bodies and their selves because they gain the ability to direct and channel the life energy. I am not saying that we will achieve this state, because our life pattern is not conducive to the attainment of this state at present, but definitely we can experience the stillness of energy and the re-emergence of that energy from the vishuddhi dimension. Laya Yoga is supposed to be the last yoga beyond Hatha, Raja, Karma and Bhakti Yogas. In fact the last stages of all the different yogas aim to bring the aspirant towards the practice of Laya Yoga.

The final aim of yoga

What is samadhi? *Samadhi* is the experience of union, it is the experience of dissolution of the outer nature, that is the aim of Raja Yoga. Even in samadhi, you find that there are different stages: *sabija*, *nirbija*, *savikara*, *nirvikara*, etc. These different stages of samadhi again each represent an altered state of consciousness, of human behavior, of human interaction ultimately leading to the state of dissolution of individuality into the cosmic energy.

Even in Bhakti Yoga nine stages have been defined and in the ninth stage is the stage of sayuja. *Sayuja* means total identification and oneness with the object of contemplation, fusion with the object of contemplation. In this sayuja there is also dissolution of the external nature. In this way we find that the end of every yoga takes the aspirant towards the experience of re-merging with the cosmic or universal consciousness.

Laya Yoga has been identified as a separate yoga which can, without going through the other processes of inner harmonization, lead you to this experience. In Raja Yoga you have to go through the practices of asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, these are the steps. In Bhakti Yoga you have to go through the various stages of bhakti. In Laya Yoga you can straight away dive into mooladhara and re-emerge from vishuddhi, provided that you have educated yourself,

you have disciplined yourself, you have focused yourself, and this discipline and focusing is one of the first aims and descriptions of yoga.

Subtle self control and sadhana

In Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* the first sutra is *atha yogah anushasanam*. Many commentators have translated the sutra as "Now begins instruction on yoga". They are right in their own way because the practice of Raja Yoga is to be done after Hatha Yoga. For example, the description of asana in Raja Yoga is *sthirah sukhamasanam*, "a posture in which the body is still, comfortable and at ease". Now in order to come to this understanding and to this level where there is absolute harmony, comfort and ease, one must have gone through some basic preparation which happens through Hatha Yoga. Even in the description of pranayama, Sage Patanjali stops after saying that pranayama is inhalation, exhalation and retention. This indicates a state of awareness where you have already attained control over the breathing pattern and the pranic force. He anticipates that you have this awareness and skill, he has not described the practices of pranayama because they have already been described in the Hatha Yoga texts.

So the system of Raja Yoga follows Hatha Yoga and the first sutra is important *atha yoga anushasanam*. Those who have studied yoga say, "Well, control of the mental *vriddhis* is the purpose of yoga," but if we look at this first sutra we find that control of mind is not the purpose of yoga which has been defined by Sage Patanjali. He has used the words: *atha*, meaning now or therefore, *shasan*, meaning to govern or rule, plus *anu*, which is a prefix representing the subtle structure of the human personality. So we get, "Now or therefore, the practices of yoga lead to *anushasanam*". According to Sage Patanjali, if one asks, "What is yoga?", the reply is, "Yoga is a way to rule or govern the subtle nature of human personality."

If you then ask him, "What is the result of this ability to govern?", he will say, *chittah vritti nirodhah*, "The ability to govern gives one the ability to control the fluctuations, the

modifications of chitta”. This is how the *Yoga Sutras* begin. So, if you adopt this approach in your attempt to understand the *Yoga Sutras*, the first statement is most important – gaining the ability to govern the subtle nature. And how do we attain that? Through practising discipline, awareness, dedication and abhyasa.

Abhyasa means practice and Sage Patanjali himself has defined abhyasa in a very beautiful way. In his fourteenth sutra he says abhyasa is something which is to be done for a long period *dirghakala*, continuously *nairantarya*, with conviction and faith *satkara*. The sutra is:

Sa tu dirghakala nairantaryasatkarasevito dridhabhumih.

“Practice is something which is to be done regularly for a long period of time with conviction, faith and determination, this will lead to the preparation of a solid ground from which you can take off.” So practice, when combined with regularity, conviction and faith, becomes sadhana.

Sadhana means to perfect something, it could be *yoga sadhana*, perfection of the yogas, it could be *jivan sadhana*, perfection of life, it could be *karma sadhana*, perfection of the actions, it could be *manas sadhana*, perfection of the mind. Sadhana is a very broad term traditionally, although we are used to using it in relation to our yoga practices.

In order to succeed in any path, system of life or yoga, it is necessary to have the attitude of a *sadhak*, one who tries to become perfect. It doesn't mean that one becomes a perfectionist because even they have no control over their mind, they can get so funny that sometimes when even a small picture frame is tilted half a millimeter they can't sit in the room because they feel that something is not right. No, that's not correct. Perfection leads to harmony and harmony is the key word.

Forum for Yoga Teachers

This is a forum for yoga teachers and we wish everyone to participate, exchanging views, comments and suggestions, giving your own understanding and insights into the yoga practices. First, let me present an overview of yoga.

It has been our belief that the concept and tradition of yoga began when we first actually became aware of ourselves and began to enquire, “Who are we? What is this body? What is this mind? What is this spirit? How can we tap the energy and the potential that is inherent in the human personality?” In fact this is how the Upanishads also begin with their enquiry into the nature of yoga.

There are five basic questions:

1. What is this body?
2. What is the mind?
3. What is the spirit?
4. What is the cause behind all this?
5. How can we develop our human potential in order to become fulfilled and successful?

What is this body?

The Upanishads have dealt with these questions in detail. They have described the body as a composition of the five tattwas, each tattwa having the potential of realizing its own nature. This means that the body itself, the physical body, has the potential to become luminous, to become effulgent, to reach a state of union with the energies that govern the physical body.

What is this mind?

A similar theory has been provided for the mind as well; mind is a potential which can look outwards and which can also develop and evolve inwards. Mind is the doorway by which one can become totally engrossed in the external, manifest dimension which is the world of the senses and objects. Mind is also a portal by which we can discover the mysteries of the spirit and the unmanifest dimension.

In the normal conditions of life this mind is very much influenced by the environment and by the movements of life which are known as *raga* and *dvesha*, attraction and repulsion. This attraction and repulsion is physical in nature as well as mental, psychic, spiritual and emotional. In fact throughout our life we feel the sway of attractions and repulsions which actually direct our efforts, actions, beliefs, concepts and ideas. All this happens in the manifest world.

Mind has been defined as *mahat* in the *Sankhya* system, having four manifest aspects: *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*. All our expressions of mind revolve around these four whether they are thoughts, desires, instincts, emotions, feelings, sensations, whatever. We have not yet evolved or developed the ability to go beyond these four aspects of the manifest self. The aim of yoga is that eventually, through the practices and through a process of self discovery, we can purify *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*, go beyond them, and come to the understanding of the pure nature of the mind. In fact, if you look at the system of yoga in which meditation has been described, the aim of yoga is to eventually bring the aspirant to this level of understanding, wisdom and experience.

What is spirit?

The third question, about spirit, has been dealt with in the Upanishads and I'm telling you the upanishadic theory because I feel that it is the right one for the present and we should try to imbibe and understand it in the context of yoga. Spirit is something which we have totally neglected by saying that it is beyond human comprehension.

You might have heard this story. A young boy was living with his mother in a remote corner of the world. His mother was very much in love with nature. In her house she had beautiful plants. In the garden she had beautiful trees, shrubs, flowers and fruits. Her whole life was dedicated to looking after her plants.

One day she had to go to another town for some work and she asked her son to look after the plants. Her son said, "No problem, I will manage it. I will look after them." His mother placed her trust in him and left. After a week she came back and found that all her plants were very ill. They were drooping, without energy, strength or lustre, and she was quite sad about the whole situation.

She called her son and said, "What did you do? Did you not look after the plants?" He said, "Yes mother, I did." She asked, "How did you look after them?" He said, "Every morning I would walk around with a cloth in my hand and wipe all the dust from their leaves, from the petals, the fruits and the trunks. I would see if there were any insects and I would remove them. I don't know why they look so droopy and down, maybe they don't like me?" His mother said, "Did you water them by any chance?" He said, "No, I did not."

That is our life. We look after our plant, definitely. If there is a bacterial infection, immediately we spray there. If there is a speck of dust, we clean it; but we have never watered our own roots. It is not the trunk which is important, nor the leaves, nor the flowers, nor the fruits, it is the roots which are the source of strength and stability for a plant.

What is the cause?

The roots of our existence are never seen. They are always underground. In the same way, the spirit is the root of our life. The mind and the body are the trunk, the branches, the leaves, the fruits and the flowers. Our entire attention is directed towards maintenance of what is seen externally but it never goes under the ground. Yoga says that the dimension

of spirit is the underlying reality, and the water of spirituality is needed in order to sustain the spirit. The body can be nourished by food, the mind can be nourished by pleasures, enjoyment, happiness and contentment, however the spirit has to be nourished with a sense of identity with the spirituality in our lives.

This spirituality begins with making an effort to realize our inner potential. Of course it evolves into different stages and forms in the course of time but one has to begin somewhere, and that is the awareness of the inherent potentials that lie in the deeper realms of our personality. The cause of body, mind and spirit is the evolutionary process.

How can we develop?

In this process of evolution we are constantly evolving, whether consciously or unconsciously it doesn't matter, the journey is there. We cannot stop the process of evolution just as we cannot stop the growth and decay of the body from the time of its birth till the time of its death. However yogis have believed that this process of evolution can be controlled by awareness. You can quicken this process and reach a level where the optimum use of the strengths of the human nature and personality can be experienced. That is the direction of human evolution, to attain fulfillment, to attain *purnata*, completeness. In one of the shanti mantras of the *Rig Veda* one specific mantra has been used and I'm sure most of you are familiar with it.

*Om purnamadah, purnamidam, purnat purnamudachyate,
Purnasya purnamadaya, purnameva vashishyate.*

This mantra can be translated as, "Everything is full and if you remove full from the full what remains is the full." That is the completeness that the yogis or the seers of the past have envisioned in the course of human evolution. The process of tapping this human potential is yoga, the answer to the fifth question.

The purpose of yoga

The word yoga means union and philosophically you might say this union is of the individual consciousness with the higher consciousness but that is setting the target very far beyond our reach. We have to begin with the process of union, with the experience of union at a very physical level: awakening of physical harmony, union of the faculties of body and brain, union of the faculties of brain and mind, union of the faculties of mind and psyche, union of the faculties of psyche and spirit. We have to go step by step, and to provide the experience of union various systems of yoga evolved, some of which are physical in nature, some of which are pranic, psychic or spiritual in nature.

As one evolves through the various practices of yoga, harmonizing the body and the various layers of the mind, one comes to a point where the entire attitude, performance and behavior undergoes a transformation. There are many people who tend to impose certain disciplines upon themselves. I have seen many people who tend to become prophets overnight when they adopt spiritual practices – with a view to profit, and if not with a view to profit, definitely the profit is there in their lives. This represents, in my opinion, a lack of maturity because we have not yet learned to control, come to terms with or manage ourselves.

Managing ourselves

For me yoga is a process of management, managing the states of the body, mind and spirit, nothing more than that. The moment we are able to manage the various states of body and mind we establish ourselves in yoga, and this process of management begins with the body.

Our body has certain limitations which we experience in the form of stiffness, aches and pains, and they have to be managed. A very good example of this process of management is in the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali when he defines the asanas as postures in which you are steady, comfortable and at ease with yourself. Now, that is the final definition of asana but in order to come to that level where we are at ease,

comfortable and steady in our posture, we have to go through a process of practise. This process of practise is learning how to manage the various conditions of the body.

It's the same thing with mind management. The ideal state of mind is a one-pointed state without dissipation, without distraction, in which the force of will is concentrated. This is not the force of will in a negative sense, that can be hard headedness, "What I say is right and I won't believe anything else." No, not like that. Will is concentrated mind. The ideal mind is where the faculties of mind become like the laser beam which can cut through steel or perform a delicate operation on the human eye without burning any other tissue. The sharpening of the mental faculty should be so clear that it will only go where you direct it. In order to come to this stage, again there has to be a process of practise, of effort, which in yoga has been provided in the practices of pratyahara, dharana, bhakti, karma, jnana and so forth.

The manifestation of samadhi

Ultimately, by passing through these different stages of self management, we come to a point where samadhi does not become or remain a self oriented process but it becomes a universal experience. I have felt very strongly in my life that if samadhi is the aim of yoga, in which one isolates oneself from the world, then I would rather not practise yoga at all. I can't accept this self-isolation from the world. It is a very selfish attitude. In this context it has been my understanding that samadhi is a state in which unity is felt between an individual and the cosmos, and the unity manifests in actions, performance, behavior, attitude and so forth.

So this is the vision of yoga which was evolved when we began questioning ourselves about who we are and what we are doing here. This questioning takes a very intense form of self analysis and self discovery. When I was in the United States of America, I met a person who was a follower of Ramana Maharishi. He said to me, "Swamiji, I ask myself every morning at the time of breakfast, 'Who am I', and that gives me fulfillment for the rest of the day." Of course I didn't

say anything, I just encouraged him to question himself at the time of lunch and dinner also. But just thinking about it is not enough. There has to be intensity of thought and feeling, and one must work to experience that. This is where the beauty of yoga lies; working on oneself in order to awaken that understanding, that experience.

It has been our experience that the various movements of yoga in the world have confined themselves to teaching yoga for the management of physical states and problems with little emphasis on mind management and no emphasis on spiritual understanding. Of course that is now changing. In fact, many times we see two extremes: one group can be too spiritual and lose touch with reality, and another group can be too physical and lose contact with the mental reality. This seems to defeat the whole purpose of yoga for short term gain.

Paramahamsaji always used to say that a human being has the faculties of head, heart and hands which are utilized day in and day out. If we deal with the awakening of one faculty only then the growth is lop-sided. If it is only jnana, head, then we are neglecting the faculties of heart and hands. If it is only bhakti, emotion, then we are neglecting the faculties of head and hands. If it is only karma, performance of action, hands, then we are neglecting the faculties of heart and head. So there should be a good combination of practices which can fulfill the need of head, heart and hands in order to uplift a person.

With this in mind, last year during the International Yoga Convention in Munger, the swamis and teachers who were present got together and made a Charter which would enable us to function independently but also as a unit, as a force to uplift human society. This year in India we have started some projects which are taking the awareness and understanding of yoga to other levels of society where people had been doing little things but no concerted effort had been made. We are confident that with the support of yoga-minded people a new wave of yoga can begin which can lead us through the emergence of the new century that is only a few years away.

If anyone would like to share their comments or views, please feel free to do so.

Questioner: Swamiji, what's happening in the area of mental illness in terms of yoga? I'm coming across it more in the last few years. There are a lot of people in Ireland who are mentally ill and who are not being treated properly by psychiatrists, they are mainly given drugs and what not.

Swamiji: What have you been teaching them?

Questioner: I have been teaching simple relaxation and *pawanmuktasana*. Some people stay with me from time to time and I'm working with them on Karma Yoga and other practices as well, it depends on the individual. So I'd just like to know what other people are actually doing in that area.

Swamiji: Okay, where shall we begin? Anyone from this side?

Second Questioner: I feel lost because I have started to work with autistics who have difficulties in the brain and with young eighteen to twenty year old boys and girls. I just love them as much as I can, and offer them a sincere devotion and compassion. I am lucky if I can do the whole of *pawanmuktasana* part one with them because their bodies are deformed. Are there any suggestions?

Swamiji: Have you any suggestions?

Guest: Yes, I've worked with autistic people for a few years, mainly young people. I have had quite good success with them, particularly with two of them.

One is a man in his forties and he was very, very unapproachable. He didn't want to be touched and he was very, very hyperactive. He wouldn't sit even for a few seconds. I just kept persevering, practically chasing him around the room and massaging him. I started by just making physical contact with him, which at the beginning he found a bit strange. He used to give me very filthy looks and sometimes he used to bite himself very hard or scratch me. I just persevered and I used to hold his hand and massage his shoulders. Then I got him to do a little bit of *pawanmuktasana*. Then I worked with crystals with him as well and a bit of aroma therapy. He loved having his feet done and there were people from different

centers in the city who actually came to film him on video. They couldn't believe that I had him lying on a bed without shoes and socks while I was massaging his feet. He used to really love it.

The other one was a young girl of about twenty. I worked with her for maybe three years I think. Again, anytime anyone wanted to approach her, to comb her hair, or for anything, she used to pick up a chair and just throw it across the room. She used to have great strength when she was angry. Again, I don't know how it happened. The first time she came into the class she just walked in by herself. I didn't know who this girl was. There was a free mat, she came in and she lay down, so I started helping her with pawanmuktasana.

Afterwards they told me that she shouldn't be there, that she hates to be touched, that she goes into a real state. I said, "Well, I've been touching her all the time. She was in the pose of the child and she was letting me do things to her." Afterwards, little by little, she started trusting me and then I used to work with her one to one. Again yoga, simple relaxations with visualization. She loved visualizations and I used to take her to all sorts of places. We were also working with the crystals, aroma therapy and music, you know very gentle music, and all the chanting, om chanting.

Again I had very great success with her, so much so that she started interacting with the group, joining in little plays that they used to do. She started sketching and painting. She started becoming more sociable through that. Yes, with autistic people I did have some success although they said it was not possible.

Swamiji: There is one hospital in Bombay where such children above the age of seven are kept. Whenever I go to Bombay I make it a point to visit that hospital. We have a good team of physiotherapists who work there and we taught them some yoga so that they can use it with the children on a daily basis.

When they started teaching yoga they began with pawanmuktasana part one. The children had to be physically moved to do it. From my understanding, more than yoga,

it was the physical contact which helped them because generally such people, especially children, are a very dejected and neglected lot. Even in the hospital I have seen people shunning them because of their deformities and mentalities. Massaging with oils combined with pawanmuktasana part one, trataka on yantra, om chanting, and lots of care has helped them.

Questioner: Swamiji, what about the yantra? Surely that is a very profound thing. Do you only use specific yantras for these people?

Swamiji: Use something simple to begin with, which they can identify with, like a yellow square or a red hexagon. They are asked to stare at it and after a while they are asked to reproduce the same image on paper; they draw. Slowly the figure of the yantra becomes more complex. We have only been doing this for the last eight months and we don't have any statistics on their improvement. However, from the subjective reports of therapists, doctors and health professionals who work there, there has been improvement in their behavior and even in their retention ability.

Also, your original question concerned mentally ill people, but that's a very broad term. What kind of illness? But in general, since you are using a very broad term, I'll also have to use a very general program. Mentally ill people have the tendency of being over stressed. They have absolutely no control over their mental activity, they are too disturbed, too distracted. Something which will initially help them is to reduce the level of stress – relaxation, simple basic pranayamas and simple stretching exercises, not even necessarily pawanmuktasana part one but things like *tadasana*, *tiryaka tadasana*, just to release the tightness and tension from the muscles and joints. When they become in tune with the practices then we can go on to pawanmuktasana parts one and two and *shakti bandhas*. No meditation.

Questioner: Yoga nidra?

Swamiji: Basic yoga nidra to make them aware of the condition of their body, rotation of awareness and basic visualizations.

Guest: Swamiji, I had a class for a couple of years with people in a mental health center and I did a short project as part of my teacher training course with Swami Satyaprakash. The yoga nidra was I think the most effective thing. They were people with anxiety and depression and some of them showed quite dramatic changes very quickly.

Swamiji: Definitely with anxiety and depression syndromes yoga nidra would be most effective.

Guest: It seemed to give them this idea that they could have some power over their own lives. I found it just amazing, very exciting. Quite soon they seemed to take hold of something, you know?

Swamiji: Once in the United States I had some opportunities to work with catatonics and that was a very interesting undertaking for three months. I decided to teach them pranayama, but how to teach it? So I used to plug their left nostrils with wax and leave them like that for a couple of hours so that pingala would begin. Day in and day out we did this practice where only pingala would flow, so gradually this change stimulated their nervous system and they became more active. Everyday I would go, check whether the wax was in place or not and then leave. That was all I did because there was absolutely no way of teaching them anything.

After about a month we began to see the result of pingala activity and an incredible change came over them later on. In three months time, according to the statistics provided by the center, they had fifteen percent improvement from a chronic depressive catatonic state to being able to recognize and move and be in control of their body. So one has to adopt different methods.

Second Guest: Swamiji some research has been done on that, because Paramahamsaji talked about this years ago, and it was in that book, *Psychic Research Behind the Iron Curtain*, in the sixties. They spoke of blocking one nostril and the effects on the brain. Fairly obviously a catatonic needs to stimulate pingala but I think one would have to be terribly careful with other states?

Swamiji: Definitely.

Second Guest: Do you know if there is any documented research that could guide those of us working in those areas? I mean, you could make it worse, quite easily, with the best of intentions, couldn't you?

Swamiji: Yes. But I don't know of any clearly documented research. I have heard rumors here and there.

Third Guest: Swamiji, could I mention something about autism? When I was doing teaching in Ireland, I had a young mother who was totally exhausted from a very hyperactive child who was totally incapable of absorbing any kind of instruction or contact. I suggested to her that she should speak to him in the Irish language because genetically he was quite sensitive, and he actually responded. She brought him to kirtan and it seemed to have an effect too. He would obey her when she spoke in the Irish language.

Guest: I found Shiatsu very very effective as well for depressed people and especially for some special needs people as we call them now. They just love being touched, they love being massaged, so much so that one of them at the center has gone on a massage course now. He's got Downe's Syndrome and he's gone on a massage course. Well, it would have to be simple practices, but he's very good, very interested and he will give massages to other people at the center.

Questioner: Swamiji is there, in the project, any emphasis on nutrition and support from that angle?

Swamiji: That is not a major problem for us in India because most of the people we come into contact with are vegetarians. Indian vegetarian food, not the sort you get in restaurants, but the sort that is common in towns and villages, is quite nutritious. Of course we do use some principles of Ayurveda, according to the constitution of the body. According to whether one is mainly vata or pitta or kapha we suggest changes in the dietary patterns and habits but fortunately we have very good dietary support in the social structure, so we haven't gone in depth.

From my own personal experience I feel that a yoga teacher, before attempting to teach yoga, should have the ability to feel out and assess the need of the person to

whom yoga is going to be taught. Eventually this will be an intuitive ability. Initially you may begin by questioning and through questions assess the level of their physical, mental or emotional disturbances and devise a plan of action in your own mind. Play with that plan of action, considering all the possibilities.

If I had to teach a person who is mentally or physically incapable of following a program, I would see the person for about a week before actually beginning a yoga program. Watch their habits, their nature, their behavior, their sleeping pattern, their needs, their weaknesses. Each day I would try to find out something new about the person. Like the first day I would just observe their habits and spend an hour chatting. Then begin a plan of the practices which can help balance those habits. The second day it would be something else. The third day something else and after about a week of analysis I would give them a yoga program. I feel this is an ability which needs to be gained by a yoga teacher in order to effectively help another person.

Sannyasa

Formative training

One should learn to interact in a responsible manner and not in an irresponsible manner. This aspect in the formation of a sannyasa life is the most important. Sannyasa recognizes one thing. One must learn to live the life which comes naturally and not impose certain structural disciplines upon oneself, because we don't have the training or knowledge of interaction with the world of the spirit. There is a saying by Shankaracharya which is, "The crooked tail of a dog cannot be made straight by putting it in a pipe." For years it can remain in the pipe and be straight but the moment you remove the pipe, the tail will again twang back and become crooked. Now that is true. Externally we have put on a garb. Externally, because of our initial drive to be part of something which we have adopted, we follow certain conditions and certain disciplines, but we have not prepared our mind for it. The moment we find an opportunity to let go of those disciplines the mind plays havoc.

What I am trying to emphasize here is formative training. This formative training can be received under the guidance of a guru by living in a community where different mentalities are at play. In fact now the situation is very different, but in the first few years of our ashram we were just a bunch of kids feeling good because we were living with the guru, and we were doing all the things that were prohibited. Many of us could not stand up to the training. Many left. Many survived

and continued for sometime and then left. Many continued for a longer time and then left and a few have continued right up to today because sannyasa is not a life that can instantaneously transform anyone. It takes hard work. Only when you have worked with yourself and subjected yourself to various hardships of life, only when you have attained some stability of mind and nature does sannyasa actually become real in one's life.

Applying sannyasa in life

Another aspect of sannyasa after the formative training is applying the principles of sannyasa in one's life. This is the most crucial stage after having the initial training. Ego plays havoc. Ego is something which one can never actually quite control. Especially for people who are psychically evolved, ego is a very powerful and tremendous force. I have seen people who are psychically very evolved and when ego manifests in them they have absolutely no control over it because the nature of ego becomes psychic. It is not something tangible, intellectual, which you can analyze and rationalize, understand, control, channel and transcend. No, it becomes a very powerful force and it can manifest as a binding negative force. It can also pull one down to earth to the attractions and pleasures of life.

So applying the understanding of sannyasa in one's life in order to manage the psychic ego is a very crucial step and after having gone through this stage one becomes free. Free from the distractions and limiting factors of life. This freedom is experienced in the spiritual dimension, because definitely as long as you have a body you have to fulfill the karmas of the body, feed it and take care of it. As long as you have a mind you have to work to please the mind too but with a different awareness, attitude and concept of life and living.

This different concept of life and living is real sannyasa, where there is an integration of what is internal and external. The two components of sannyasa which manifest here are viveka and vairagya. Viveka is discrimination and vairagya is

non-attachment. When viveka and vairagya manifest in one's life desires become less, attractions become less. Somebody asked Paramahamsaji, "How can one know when one is evolving spiritually? Are there milestones which can indicate how much one has evolved?" Paramahamsaji said only one thing, "Yes, as you evolve you will find that your desires and your attachments and your attractions to the world are getting less." If they increase, whether it is for name or fame or money or recognition or status, then you will know that you are not going in the right direction. If these things do not matter to you at all and you live in the present moment with a vision of the future and with clarity of mind, then you will know that you are evolving.

I have seen this principle applying itself in sannyasa life for those who have the strength to seriously work on themselves. I feel that sannyasa is not contradicting the materialistic lifestyle at all. Rather I feel that sannyasa can be lived more fully when combined with a materialistic lifestyle because one is fulfilling the needs and desires of body, senses and mind. At the same time one is evolving a different awareness and a different vision and learning to work with oneself. So one can never say, "Oh I did not have that in my life, I missed that experience in my life."

Traditional sannyasa

The tradition has been very specific. It has described a philosophy of sannyasa, an aim of sannyasa which is something spiritual and beyond the normal human comprehension because of the influence of the environment which surrounds us. At the same time, in sannyasa it is said that one should be practical and not live in a world of fantasy. One has to be practical, and exhaust the samskaras, the desires and the karmas by being practical. The practicality in sannyasa has, in fact, been more emphasized.

In the tradition, people who had different backgrounds, and who were not exposed to the comforts and luxuries of life, were able to instantly cut themselves off from the main stream of society and lead a secluded lifestyle without any

problem. They did not have any mental hang-ups or problems and still today we find a lot of such sannyasins and sadhus who live in remote corners of the world. Those people who have been exposed to different cultures and systems of belief have to work a bit more.

It has been my experience that whether one is Indian or from abroad, no matter who they are, people have been conditioned culturally to think, act, behave, interact and believe in a certain way. As long as the system is in accordance with that programming, they can accept it. When you take them out of that programming and they go into a different environment, it becomes difficult. They tend to lose contact with the true spirit of sannyasa and they divert their attention and their energies in another area altogether. Every year I see it happen and I am quite aware of it because I've been giving sannyasa to people who have been doing such things.

Qualifications for sannyasa

Now, you may ask why do I give sannyasa to such people. Well, I have restricted it a lot. Swami Sivananda, in the modern age, was a person who would give sannyasa to everyone. He used to say that the seed of spirituality is there in everyone, it only needs the right timing to flower. He was of the opinion that everyone should have an exposure to sannyasa life. The same tradition was carried on by Paramahansa Satyananda. He gave sannyasa left, right and center to everyone. He had the strength and the energy to guide and inspire people, so there is no question about that. When the burden fell on these shoulders I knew, and I know now, that I don't have that strength and energy which Swami Sivananda or Swami Satyananda had and I don't think I want it either. It's too much of a problem.

So in 1990, for one year I travelled and visited swamis, teachers of the tradition, acharyas and gurus. I met with them, had discussions with them and eventually came to an understanding. In this present day, in order to experience sannyasa properly, there has to be a system by which we can

provide proper training to individual aspirants so they can cultivate certain qualities in life which can take them to realize the deeper meaning of sannyasa. With this idea in mind I developed the Jignasu system, in consultation with other swamis of the tradition and also in consultation with swamis of our movement.

Jignasu, the yellow-robed ones, represent the first stage in the experience of sannyasa lifestyle. At the time of initiation they are given specific guidelines on how to think, how to behave, what quality to develop and what ideal routine to follow. It is suggested that, as and when time permits and the situation permits, you develop one quality at a time and go on until you become firm within yourself, clear within yourself. Then you can take the next step in yourself which is Karma Sannyasa, where you work a bit more and develop yourself a bit more. Then you can go for Poorna Sannyasa. So equal opportunities are provided for everyone to experience the sannyasa lifestyle.

Can we do justice to sannyasa?

Now as to the question of whether we can do justice to it. I personally feel that the inclination of an individual and the determination and drive of a person can lead them to great heights. I have said many times, even in India, that in the *Dasnami* tradition founded by Shankaracharya to which we belong, there are fifty two hundred thousand sannyasins, not counting other denominations.

Now imagine if each of these sannyasins was a perfect human being, the entire face of the world would change in one night because fifty two hundred thousand is not a small number. But out of them all there are very few who have devoted themselves or dedicated themselves to the real experience of sannyasa. As Swami Nischalananda said, they don't know what goes on in their hearts. What is their aspiration? What is their desire and ambition? We should not concern ourselves with that, rather we should look at how we can incorporate the concepts of sannyasa in our own life pattern.

If our drive is sincere then definitely we can do justice to sannyasa and be one of the few who have become a light unto ourselves. But if that inspiration is fluctuating, then whether it is sannyasa or a normal lifestyle you will not be able to do justice to it at all. Why do we have to think that it is only in sannyasa that we fail or succeed? We fail or succeed in every other form of life, as a student, a householder, a doctor, or a scientist. Failure or success is of no importance to a sannyasin as long as there is clarity of vision or aim. In the western context I believe that if we are exposed to the tradition of sannyasa gradually, and we learn how to manage our mind and ego, how to develop certain disciplines through which we can imbibe universal qualities, then definitely we can do justice to sannyasa. But that remains an individual question.

How firm do we feel within ourselves? How committed? Definitely I am against people who wish to be part of the club. Sannyasa is not for them, no. If we can have sincerity of thought and sincerity towards our own life, then we can at least walk part of the way. Even if we cannot reach our destination, that walk will definitely bring us closer to our goal.

*“The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have many miles to go before I sleep.”*

Swamiji, does a Poorna Sannyasin have to renounce all personal attachments, like brahmacharya?

No, they renounce you, you don't have to renounce them. You can take sannyasa any time but there comes a time when the attraction and desire to live a life of 'status' becomes less. When this happens naturally, then you evolve in the sannyasa life. You do not have to renounce anything externally. Of course in the Indian context, the tradition says that you have to renounce, and a training is also given in how to manage different desires when they manifest. One has to reach a point of perfection in those trainings too. Well, it is mind management again.

One day a guru was walking with his disciples through the town of Swansea. It happened many years before you or

I were born, maybe some of the elders here will remember that event. The guru walked into a pub and had scotch on the rocks. The disciples said, “Well, if he can do it then we can also do it!”. They also had scotch on the rocks. Was there any difference in their action? No, you agree to that. Then the guru came out of the pub and walked into a red light home. The disciples said, “Alright, if guru can do it, then it must be alright for us”, so they walked in. AIDS was not common in those days. The guru came out and went to a place where they were blowing molten glass, making glasses. He took a container full of molten glass and drank it. The disciples looked at each other and said, “Only a guru can do such things.”

So here again we are discussing how we dress the guru according to our likes and how we color the teachings. Nobody here has ever seen the real colors of reality. Blind people can never see a complete elephant. One will touch a leg and say the elephant is like a pillar. Another will touch the trunk and say it is like a snake. Another will say the tail is like a rope. If one can develop the kind of vision that sees reality, then that is the culmination of sannyasa and the guru disciple relationship. So one should try to see the colors of reality without putting on any colored glasses over the eyes. Therefore practise sincerity, simplicity, trust and devotion. Practise *swadhyaya*, self study, so that we will become aware of the sadhana necessary. These are the ingredients so that we can make a nice spiritual soup.

Cosmic Consciousness

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Mooladhara Dhyana

Breathe in deeply and chant om with me three times, all together. Become aware of the whole body internally. Complete awareness of the body from the top of the head to the toes, and make sure that you are at ease. If there are any areas of tension or tightness in the body then become aware of them and adjust yourself so that you are comfortable and relaxed. Maintain the consciousness of your body at perfect ease.

As you go deeper into the experience of the body you will notice that there is total stillness and within the stillness there is an experience of silence. The silence is physical in nature and also mental.

Be aware of this inner silence pervading the body and mind. Go deep into the experience of stillness and silence. Feel the body to be like an empty shell, just a covering of skin and inside the body is space, and around the body, outside, there is space.

Develop the awareness of the body like an empty shell, a balloon containing space within itself and surrounded by space on all sides. Develop this experience and gradually disassociate yourself from the physical experiences of comfort and discomfort, relaxation and tension, pleasure and pain.

The space within the body is nothing but an expression, a manifestation of consciousness and energy within you.

The space surrounding the body is nothing but an expression, a manifestation of consciousness and energy around you.

Now focus your attention in the center of the head.

Focus your attention in space in the center of the head. Visualize the headspace which is known as chidakasha in the form of a cave.

Visualize chidakasha in the form of a cave. The crown of the head is the ceiling of the cave. The right side of the head and the left side of the head are the right and left walls. The back of the head is the back wall and the forehead is the front wall with an opening at the third eye. See yourself in the center of the cave in chidakasha.

You have to experience. Do not identify with the body nor with the mind. Disassociate yourself completely from the physical experiences of the body and from the experiences of the mind. You are only the drashta, the observer or seer of what is happening within you. You are only awareness, observing the interplay of consciousness and energy within the physical frame and experiencing the cave of chidakasha.

Go towards the back of the cave. In the back of the cave you will find a tunnel, deep and dark, without any light, and that tunnel slopes downwards. Go into that tunnel with total awareness and without fear.

Go into that tunnel. You will find that it slopes downwards. It is the tunnel of the spinal passage and you move along this tunnel. Moving down, moving down, as if you are floating.

When you come towards the base of the spinal passage you will see another cave. The mouth of the tunnel opens into another cave. Go inside that cave, the cave of mooladhara. It's dark in there but in the center of the cave there is a tiny red light, a glimmering red light.

Walk towards that red light. Your whole awareness has to be centered in the mooladhara cave. The mooladhara region feels like the seat of an immense power. There is throbbing, there is energy, there is continuous vibration. Experience that in the cave of mooladhara.

As you walk towards the center where a small red light glimmers, you will see that this small red light takes the image of a shiva

lingam. This shiva lingam is red, deep dark red and it is luminous. The light is radiating from the shiva lingam and lightly illuminating the cave of mooladhara.

Intensify the awareness.

Sit down in front of the deep, dark red shiva lingam.

As your eyes get accustomed to the deep darkness of mooladhara you will notice that something is coiled around the shiva lingam, but there is no fear.

Feel the vibration, feel the spandan, the continuous vibration of energy, divine shakti. What is coiled around the shiva lingam is kundalini, Adi Shakti, the primordial energy, the source of all creation.

While you are sitting down, sit in a meditative posture. Focus your gaze on this luminous shiva lingam and you will be chanting short oms.

Please listen carefully to the instructions. Go on visualizing yourself in the cave of mooladhara, sitting in meditative posture, in another dimension, in another world altogether where the material world has no power. It is the world of Adi Shakti, the primordial energy. Feel the intensity of energy, vibration, force.

Focus your attention on the luminous shiva lingam and the coiled body of kundalini, and with the gaze fixed, with the attention fixed on this image, symbol, you will be chanting the mantra om.

The chanting will be done in the following way. Each chanting of the om mantra will be short, with several oms in one breath, soft and gentle, and you will feel the waves of energy moving in the mooladhara region, ascending in your body up along the tunnel into the cave of chidakasha.

Waves of energy moving from mooladhara through your body up along the tunnel into the chidakasha cave. Continue this practice with firm, undisturbed concentration and awareness until I ask you to stop.

Begin, feel the waves of energy travelling within you, vibrating within you.

Om Om Om Om Om . . .

Now we come back from the cave of mooladhara to the opening of the tunnel and, as we reach the opening, we begin to gently float upwards along this tunnel of the spinal passage.

The waves of energy push us up along this tunnel and we come back to chidakasha.

In chidakasha, in the region of the eyebrow center, visualize the symbol of a flame, the eternal flame, the chaitanya jyoti. The flame is the doorway between the manifest and the unmanifest realms of energy.

Focus yourself on the symbol of the flame, chaitanya jyoti, in the region of the third eye.

Breathe in deeply and chant om three times together.

Slowly externalize the senses and the mind.

Do not immediately open the eyes but externalize the senses and the mind.

Gradually begin to move the body, fingers, hands, arms.

Rub the palms of the hands and place the palms on top of the eyes and then gently open the eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat

Laya Yoga

This practice is a system of yoga which is known as Laya Yoga. *Laya* means to dissolve; and the dissolution of the human consciousness into the cosmic consciousness is a natural process.

One day a doll made of salt had a brainstorm and decided to dive into the depths of the ocean to find out its depth. It found a nice diving board and splash! And nobody has ever heard of or seen that doll of salt again. That is known as dissolution and that is Laya Yoga.

It is the human mind and consciousness which has a natural inclination to merge with the cosmic consciousness. Two magnets are wanting to come together, but between the two magnets there is a block of wood and that wood is of maya or avidya. Because it is there, the two magnets can feel the force, they can feel the pull, just like you can feel the pull which is very light, but which is there, yet they can never

come together. To enable the magnets to come together one has to simply remove the block of wood from the middle.

In the normal sadhana which we perform for our development and inner growth, we come to a point where we have to confront maya and avidya, both. Maya has generally been translated as illusion and avidya has been translated as ignorance, but we can define *maya* and *avidya* as the absence of the faculty of cognition of reality. In the practices of meditation in yoga there is a motivation to develop that ability of cognition. In the process of developing that ability we become aware of different layers of energy and consciousness which represent altered states of perception and being; realizing a different state.

Please don't confuse this statement with the normal concept of what happens to external social life when I reach a state of realization. What happens to your external social life is another matter altogether and I'm sure that if you are able to harmonize yourself there won't be any conflict between the external and the internal. Conflict only arises when we are unable to harmonize this experience with that. Oil and water don't mix well together, at that time conflict is there. We don't want to make our life like oil and water which have a definite identity here and a definite identity there.

Our life must have the ability to flow from one stage into the next without any problems and difficulties. In fact if at all there is any *siddhi* in life I would say it is that. Siddhi in life is not telepathy, it is not floating in air, it is not tele-transportation; in fact science can do more wonders than any siddha. The actual ability to be evolved in life is being able to merge and to flow from one stage to the next. In this process we encounter different dimensions of consciousness and energy, and in each dimension we have to merge the present state of mind with the experienced state of consciousness. Clear so far?

Developing a different vision

This merger at each step is a process of Laya. The doll of salt diving in to the water – we don't know how far she went. There

has been no evidence in all of that deep diving of Jacques Cousteau that they found a doll floating around, no. You know Khrushchev once said, “Our pilots have gone high but they have never seen God.” Remember that? We don’t want to have that kind of mentality, because in order to experience a different nature, a different mentality, we need to have an appropriate vision. With the naked eye we can’t see the atomic structures but just because we can’t see it with the naked eye we cannot deny the existence of atoms, protons, neutrons and electrons. They have been experimented with and found to have a certain function, quality, energy and even consciousness. So in each subtle microcosmic and even in macrocosmic stages the personal vision has to change.

The senses remain the same but the vision changes and the quality of the senses also changes. In Laya Yoga we begin perfecting the states of pratyahara and dharana. They are prerequisites in order to move into the practices of Laya Yoga. After perfecting pratyahara and dharana, we go within to experience the interplay of energy and consciousness, by evolving awareness of the tattwas and by evolving awareness of the chakras.

Tattwa Shuddhi is one of the preliminary practices of Laya Yoga and as you pass through these different stages you are able to observe the state of being of energies at different centers, and of consciousness at different centers. At each center they represent a different quality, a particular nature, and mind has to fuse with that quality and nature. Eventually one gains the ability to dive into the dimension of energy at mooladhara and to re-emerge as a luminous consciousness in the form of space. The star child of 2001 is vishuddhi, and that is the process of Laya Yoga.

Swamiji, regarding poorna sannyasins living in social communities, is it alright for us to support ourselves from teaching yoga?

I agree with it whole heartedly. There has to be a structure of support. That support should allow us freedom, and give us an opportunity to pursue the way of life that we wish to lead

so we do not have to look in rubbish bins for what is thrown away in order to survive. There are some societies which can support this style of living and there are some which don't. If I try living like an Indian sannyasi in the middle of London I'll probably be put in an asylum, it's just not on. So, there has to be an adjustment with the norms of the society and the local culture.

Sannyasa, in such a context, should be a personal lifestyle in which you are comfortable, happy and satisfied and at the same time you are fulfilling the role of a sannyasi by helping the community. That is the external aspect of sannyasa, to help the community. You are helping the community and the community is supporting you, so it is a mutual give and take relationship which you develop with the community as a sannyasin.

When sannyasa is a personal lifestyle then you can go as far as you want and develop and cultivate the qualities which are necessary for you to evolve. Develop the aspects of contentment, satisfaction and harmony in your life so that other people who are feeling stressed can feel the peace coming from you. That is your personal approach to the sannyasa life. The social approach to sannyasa life is to give and take mutual support and help, living according to the norms of the society and culture.

Please give your observations on those of us linked with guru, recognizing that our true aim in teaching yoga is to serve the highest goal of the mission, the spiritual enrichment of mankind.

That seems to be a very personal question, a link which a person can create with the teacher, with the guru. There are some people who can create a very deep and intimate relationship with the guru. There are also some people who can only relate on the intellectual level for some kind of contentment and happiness, by believing and feeling, "We are helping in the mission of the guru." Of course when we use the word guru, I hope that also means a deep link with the inner guru because *guru* means that inspiration which

manifests within, and you are able to perceive that inspiration inside. That is the purpose or the meaning of the guru disciple relationship.

So if that inner link is there then definitely there is identification with the thoughts, the mentality, the personality and the mission of the guru. A disciple is always in tune with the desire and with the mission of service which has been established by the guru. Eventually there may come a time when a disciple may outstrip the guru too, but don't make an effort to outshine the guru without feeling this inner link first. It is dependent on how far you are able to take your own feeling of unity with the guru.

Please comment on the sannyasins living on the razor edge of sacrifice, financial responsibilities etc.

The razor's edge can be cushioned properly so that you don't cut yourself with every step. This cushioning can be done, first of all, with *santosha*, contentment, through which you are able to control inner desires and cravings for name and fame written in neon lights. Being happy with what is there, with your own life, with your own effort and contribution and with the encouragement and support that we are receiving. Contentment is also acceptance of life, as it is, in totality.

Secondly comes *samarpan*, surrendering to the divine will. The divine will is definitely not the kind of inspiration which Joan of Arc got, but it gives one the ability to recognize the need of the present time and to function and to work according to that need without projecting your own aspirations for the future. If surrender has to be defined in other words, I would say it is living in the present. Generally I find that we live in memories of the past with high hopes for the future, while totally ignoring the present. With this kind of mentality it becomes difficult to surrender or even to receive inner inspiration. Use the past for understanding the actions, karmas, environments and situations which you have encountered and received some knowledge from. Use that knowledge to improve the present. The moment you improve the present the future will be cleared anyway. This

is the aspect of surrender which I feel is necessary in the life of a sannyasin.

Thirdly comes *shram*, meaning to act, to work, to be involved. This involvement is personal, social and global. Personal we have dealt with – that feeling of inner conviction, allowing oneself to go as far as is humanly possible. Social we have discussed – support the community which has provided you with opportunities to grow in life. That is something we can't ignore. The community has supported you in becoming what you are today so how can we neglect that aspect? We have to fulfill our karma of supporting the community in the right way. In fulfilling this debt to the community we offer our best, the qualities or abilities which we know can be useful for the benefit of the community. Some people may be able to educate others, some may be good teachers, some may be good communicators.

Use your ability to make the community grow and evolve and that way a global interaction also takes place because although the community begins in our immediate vicinity, in the course of time the vision evolves into a global vision. More and more people who are working to help the community become part of that global community. So, while keeping in touch, helping people who are on the same path as you, supporting them, guiding them, receiving their cooperation and support, become a force unto thyself. These are some of the ways in which a sannyasin can put cushions on the razor's edge and be comfortable.

England



Introduction to Laya Yoga

We will begin with a Laya Yoga meditation and the theory and discussion on the subject will be done later on, so please sit down comfortably.

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Mooladhara Dhyana

Body upright and straight. Hands on the knees or in the front, wherever comfortable. Gently close your eyes.

For a few moments become aware of your whole body, the posture in which you are sitting, awareness of the whole body. Make sure that you are relaxed physically, free from tension. There should be nothing tight, you should not feel uncomfortable. Be at ease with yourself.

Mentally observe the posture of your body. Move your attention from one part of the body to the next, from the head to the toes, and make sure of comfort and ease. The feeling of relaxation is all pervading within you.

Complete awareness of the whole body.

Breathe in gently and chant om three times with me and repeat after me the shanti path.

Become aware of the stillness and silence that pervades the body. During the practice, any time you feel the need to move the body you may do so but please do it quietly, silently, so that

you do not disturb your own concentration and can maintain constant and continuous awareness.

Feel the sensation of stillness and silence in your body. Complete awareness of the body from the top of the head to the toes.

Mentally observe the flow of the natural breath.

Observe the flow of the natural breath. As you breathe in, within the nostrils feel a gentle cool sensation and as you breathe out feel a gentle warm sensation. Observe the breath, the natural incoming and outgoing breath, by mentally becoming aware of the temperature of the breath within the nostrils.

Intensify the awareness of breath and begin to experience the flow in the spinal passage. At the time of inhalation feel the breath rise from the base of the spine to the crown of the head. At the time of exhalation feel the breath move from the crown of the head to the base of the spine.

Observe the movement of the breath from the base of the spine to the crown of the head and then down, at the time of inhalation and exhalation.

Move your awareness with the natural incoming and outgoing breath up and down along the back, from the base of the spine to the crown of the head and then down from the crown of the head to the base of the spine. Experience this movement of the breath.

As the consciousness moves up and down with the breath begin to observe a luminous thread in the spinal passage along which the awareness moves. A bright luminous thread from the base of the spine to the crown of the head, and the awareness moves up along this luminous thread with the breath and then down along this thread.

Gradually you will have to develop the power of visualization. You will have to intensify the will. By the force of the will and visualization begin to experience the movement of consciousness along the luminous thread from mooladhara to sahasrara.

Continue with this practice for a few moments, each time developing more sensitivity, more awareness and identification with the movement of the breath, the ascending and descending of consciousness and the luminous thread.

Do not allow yourself to be disturbed by the experiences of the physical body. Experiences of discomfort or aches and pains should not disturb your awareness and your practice of inner visualization.

Just focus on the two points of mooladhara and sahasrara; mooladhara at the base of the spine, sahasrara, the crown chakra. These two centers are connected by a luminous thread running along the spinal passage. The awareness ascends and descends through this luminous path along with inhalation and exhalation.

Now focus yourself in the region of mooladhara chakra. At the base of the spinal passage visualize the mooladhara chakra. The mooladhara is to be visualized in the form of a cave, a deep dark cave. In the center of that cave is a red, luminous point of light, a deep dark red point of light.

Visualize the cave of mooladhara by taking the awareness down to mooladhara. Please remember that the visualization has to take place at the location of the chakra, not in chidakasha; not in the head space but in the space of the chakra.

Visualize the cave of mooladhara, a deep dark cave, and in the center of the cave there is a point of light emanating from a stone which is kept on the ground on the floor of the cave.

As you adjust your mental awareness to the vision, to the experience of the cave, you will notice that the point from which this deep dark red light is emanating is a stone, a rock in the form of a shiva lingam. The shiva lingam is glowing internally. The color of the glow is deep dark red and it is that red luminosity emanating from the shiva lingam which is also illuminating the cave.

Focus yourself on the image, on the symbol of the shiva lingam. Visualize this red shiva lingam. Do not allow your awareness to be distracted by the external surroundings and sounds. Let them be there, keep yourself focused on the image, the symbol of the shiva lingam in the cave of mooladhara chakra.

As you intensely observe the symbol of the shiva lingam you will notice that around the base of the shiva lingam there is a form, that of a snake, which is coiled around the base of the shiva lingam.

There is no fear. Just be aware of the mooladhara symbol, the self luminous shiva lingam with a snake coiled around the base of it. Feel the energy. Experience the light which is radiating from this shiva lingam up into the space of your physical body. Do not allow your mind to fluctuate. Sensitize the mind. Just as you are visualizing the symbol of the shiva lingam and the snake in the cave of mooladhara, just as you are experiencing the reddish glow of the shiva lingam filling the whole space of mooladhara, in the same way now you will have to experience the power, the force, of that energy which is there in mooladhara chakra.

Focus your whole awareness in the experience of mooladhara. Please listen carefully. Now we will be chanting om and it will be done in the following way. In one breath chant short oms as many times as you can comfortably without becoming breathless and while we chant the mantra om we will keep our awareness fixed on the symbol of the shiva lingam.

Have the vision of the cave illuminated by the reddish glow which is emanating from the shiva lingam. As the sound waves travel in the space of the body, waves of energy from mooladhara also travel upwards. Although the chanting of the mantra om will be done by the body, through the mouth, the vibration of the mantra has to be felt in the cave of mooladhara.

Please listen once to how the mantra will be chanted and when I ask you to begin, only then begin the practice.

Om Om Om Om Om . . .

In this way you don't have to wait for anyone, just keep on continuously repeating the short om mantras with every breath and keep on visualizing the symbol of the shiva lingam.

Have the vision of the luminous shiva lingam and the cave, and feel the vibrations of om coming up from mooladhara chakra into the body space, up to sahasrara.

Pervade the whole body with the vibration, with the force and with the shakti of the mantra om.

We begin.

Om Om Om Om Om . . .

Stop the chanting of the mantra om. Remain silent and still for a few moments.

Now slowly externalize the senses. Become aware of the sounds around you, the environment.

Let go of the awareness of mooladhara. Let go of the awareness of the symbol, the vibration. Externalize the mind.

Breathe in deeply and chant om three times with me.

Again repeat om after me and the shanti path three times.

Rub the palms of the hands together and place them on top of the closed eyes.

Gently open your eyes and move your body.

Hari Om Tat Sat

First we will discuss the definition of Laya Yoga, second the different aspects of Laya Yoga, third the practice which we did and how it relates to Laya Yoga.

The definition of Laya Yoga

The meaning of the word *laya* is to dissolve and *Laya Yoga* aims to dissolve the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness but in this process one has to go through various stages of practice. Dissolution of consciousness is not an easy thing to do and Laya Yoga is considered to be one of the last yogas to be mastered after having perfected Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Kundalini and Kriya Yoga, and the other yogas. In fact we can say that it is one of the last yogas which we have to perfect in our life before coming to the feeling of that union and oneness. It is in this context that we will have to understand the relevance of Laya Yoga practice.

Hatha Yoga represents the first step in this vast yogic structure. In the practices of Hatha Yoga we learn to work with our bodies, to purify the different systems of the body and to harmonize the various functions of the body. In this way we gain stability in physiological, cerebral and mental activities. Traditionally Hatha Yoga was a collection of six practices only, which are known as shatkarmas: neti, dhauti, bhasti, kapalbhathi, trataka and nauli. These are purificatory practices, cleansing techniques to eliminate toxins from the

body and to reach a state of physical purity and harmony. This harmony reflects in the mental states and even in the structure and the dimension of the body of energy, the pranamaya kosha.

Before we go into a detailed discussion of the subject, I would like you to understand the yogic concept of the human being. The yogic concept of the human body is that it is composed of five koshas:

1. *Annamaya kosha*, meaning the physical body composed of matter, the manifest elements
2. *Manomaya kosha*, the body of mind composed of subtle elements
3. *Pranamaya kosha*, the body of energy composed of even more subtle elements
4. *Vijnanamaya kosha*, the body where knowledge becomes a reality, it is not an intellectual process but becomes a living experience
5. *Anandamaya kosha*, the body or dimension in which bliss, harmony, peace and union with the higher self is experienced.

Yogis have believed, and not only believed but they have experienced, that it is possible for a normal person to evolve through these different koshas. The evolution of human consciousness through these different koshas represents the culmination of evolution in one's life before passing on to another state of life which we call the realized nature. The practices of yoga evolved in order to bring one closer to the experience of these koshas. That has been the real aim of the yogic practices.

The development of different systems of yoga

Of course many different additions have been made to the yogic tradition. Different practices were added later by yogis and sadhakas who had undergone stages of purification and evolution, and who felt that the practices which they had perfected could help other beings with a similar mentality and personality. So we find that in yoga on one side we can have hard physical practices such as asanas and shatkarmas.

On the other hand we can have mental practices which allow one to simply flow with life such as *Bhakti Yoga*. On another side we can have practices which can stimulate one's intellect and with the stimulation of intellect bring one to a higher understanding or realization of human nature, as in the practices of Jnana Yoga. There are also practices which can stimulate and awaken the dormant energies within, such as Kriya Yoga and Kundalini Yoga.

Like this, different yogis have added their own versions of yoga to this system which allows one to experience the different koshas. Moving from annamaya kosha, the dimension of matter, to anandamaya kosha, the dimension of union, where a person can become a super being, was kept as the aim of yoga.

Many practices of yoga eventually went underground because the people who became teachers, and propagated the understanding and the vision of those realized beings, themselves did not have that vision and so could not relate with the experiences. For example, if we cannot relate with Laya Yoga we won't even think about it, we will only concentrate on the practices which we can see and feel are altering and changing the physical state.

The re-emergence of systems of yoga

This is what actually happened, of the many systems of yoga which went underground, only a few survived which we were eventually able to identify. Those systems were of Hatha Yoga; they had something physical in nature, where we could see how the practices would work on our body, how they would remove the toxins from the body, how they could help alter the states and conditions of the body. In the practices of Raja Yoga we could also see a progression, moving through the different stages from the physical experience, to mental, to psychic. Only recently, as we have become more sensitive to our inner being, the practices of Kriya Yoga and Kundalini Yoga have surfaced. Twenty years back even they were not known to people. It is only now that Laya Yoga is re-emerging.

The normal trend of human consciousness is to sensitise itself to the experiences of different realities which exist around us. Reality is not one, there are many realities, and we find that each yoga is a stepping stone into another subtle yoga. Hatha Yoga prepares the ground for Raja Yoga, Raja Yoga prepares one for Kriya Yoga and Kundalini Yoga, and they in turn prepare the ground for the practice of Laya Yoga. The important thing is that one must attain perfection in the previous stage before moving on to the next. Until we have perfected a stage of yoga we have not mastered it and no matter how hard we try we will not be able to experience the next level.

There are some people who are sensitive by nature and therefore they may have some experiences of the higher yogas without undergoing training in the previous stages. However, in my experience, such people usually feel lost when they have experiences with which they cannot relate. Therefore even those experiences of other levels of consciousness, other states of being, have no meaning for them except, "I feel good." I have seen that there is a form of satisfaction but there is no attainment in it. It is only a mental satisfaction, "Okay, I have now seen it, experienced it, but it hasn't actually changed my life for the better, rather it has confused me even more because I do not know how to handle myself or manage myself where such things happen." So perfection in the previous stages of yoga is a must.

We find this idea becomes stronger as we move into the subtler aspects of yoga where we have to deal with the mind, the human psyche, the energy centers and with altered states of consciousness. Therefore the prerequisites for Laya Yoga and also for Kriya and Kundalini Yoga are that one perfects the techniques of pratyahara and dharana. Asana and pranayama are not given much importance because yogis know that human beings identify more with their bodies than with anything else, and will do anything to keep their body fit and trim. We also notice in our own life that we feel physically good, we have a sense of happiness, an even, healthy state of body when we practise physical postures and

breathing techniques. However, the main thing is directing and realizing the states of mind because ultimately it is the mind which becomes important and not the body.

The limitations of gross awareness

The body simply represents an outer structure in which subtle forces are at play. Just to give you an example, if we get a pimple on our hand we get neurotic about it and we try to figure out what it is and how to heal it. However we are not aware of the condition which exists within our respiratory system, in the cardiovascular system or in the digestive system. We only become aware of the imbalances of the inner body when a point of crisis has been reached. If I faint, then I suddenly realize that my blood pressure has shot up and that my circulatory system has been thrown out of balance. If I get a hernia or an ulcer, then I realize there is something wrong with my digestion. If I feel shortness of breath or have asthma attacks, then I realize that something is wrong with my respiratory system. In order to realize that there is something wrong with the inner body functions it seems we must first reach a point of crisis and then we become aware of it and try to rectify the defect.

The same thing happens with our mind too. The mind is constantly being bombarded by the inputs: sensory, mental, intellectual and emotional. We usually think that everything is alright but there comes a time when we feel stressed out and then we say, "Oh, something is not right." I am trying to give you a picture of these subtle areas of our life, is it clear?

The deeper we go within ourselves, the more subtle we become. However, there is less identification, knowledge and awareness of what is actually happening to us. There is absolutely no knowledge at all, not even an inkling, of what is happening in the structure of energy and consciousness. Whatever we have thought has been speculation, or belief in someone who has experienced it, and that is what we also have been saying until now, without any personal experience. So there comes a point when, in the absence

of personal experience, we begin to believe, and belief becomes powerful.

Belief provides a bridge into unmapped territory

I haven't seen God, yet I believe in it. You haven't seen God, yet you may believe in it. There is a movement in the human mind which is going from the gross to the transcendental. Up to a point there is rationality, beyond that there is no rationality. Up to a point there is awareness – "I know", the knowledge is there, but beyond that there is an area of speculation only and beyond that there is nothing. We can say that it is like a person who is diving into the ocean. As one dives deeper, the light which is coming from the sun gradually becomes less and less and less until there is absolute darkness.

Light here represents cognition and as you go deeper within yourself it becomes less. When yoga says that the aim of yoga is to awaken the faculties of consciousness and the faculties of energy within, then it is being implied that you have to go to a non-physical state of cognition from the physical state. This is because we have not experienced what consciousness is, we have only experienced our mind and we have only experienced our mind in the form of ambition, desires, ego, thoughts, feelings, emotions, etc.

What we call the mind is only the manifest aspect which is interacting with the world of the senses and objects, name, form and idea. It is the manifest aspect of the total consciousness and the unmanifest aspect is not known. Therefore great emphasis has been given in the yogic tradition to perfecting one state. We identify with the body so we don't worry about the body – asana and pranayama are spontaneous and natural inclinations of a person. The main sadhana, the main effort has to be put into the practices of pratyahara and dharana.

Pratyahara and dharana: sensory expansion and awakening

In the processes of Laya Yoga, pratyahara is more important than any practice of dhyana meditation. Dharana is more important than any other practice of meditation. Meditation

is not at all important. I totally disagree with people who say that meditation is a must. According to yoga the control of the modifications of the mind, knowledge of the different experiences of the mind, will only begin when we become aware of them. If there is no awareness of these different mental states then how are you going to manage them? There has to be awareness and pratyahara provides this.

Normally pratyahara is translated as a sensory withdrawal technique. In a way this is right because they are describing the final state of pratyahara, but the real meaning of *pratyahara* is a sensory expansion technique where one initially expands and extends the knowledge, extends the awareness. By this extension of awareness one comes to know about the interaction of mind with itself, with the body, with the senses, with the ego, with the subtle aspect of personality and with the consciousness. Only when you have become a scout and discovered the jungles of your mind can the army actually march in. When you know where the tracks are, when you know where the hills and the holes are, that is pratyahara – complete knowledge. After that is dharana. After having gained awareness and knowledge of everything which exists in the mental kingdom we begin to work to channel the mental forces, to awaken the mental energies, to experience the different altered states of mind – and that is *dharana*.

Perfection of these two is a must before the practice of Kriya Yoga, because in Kriya Yoga the emphasis is given to the experience of energy, chakras and the awakening of kundalini. Kundalini or the awakening of energy, simply represents one aspect of our total structure which is comprised of two forces: energy and consciousness. In Kriya Yoga and Kundalini Yoga practices we are only dealing with the aspect of energy. As the energy awakens and moves from chakra to chakra, as the potentials of the chakra begin to unfold, simultaneously there is an awakening of consciousness too.

Aspects of Laya Yoga: expansion of consciousness

All the books are silent on the awakening of consciousness. They only speak about the awakening of energy, the

experience of energy, how you will be able to feel the movement of energy, how you can visualize that energy, how you can use that energy. What about managing the state of consciousness which is also being awakened with the energy? This is where Laya Yoga comes in.

Laya Yoga is the other side of the coin. It teaches us to become aware of the subtler states of consciousness which manifest with the awakening of a particular level of energy. So Laya Yoga has to be practised along with Kundalini and Kriya Yoga. It is a process of observing the states of the emotions, attitudes and behaviors which influence our external interaction in the world. There are people who have been able to awaken their pranic energy, pranic forces, but have not been able to manage the consequences. Even gurus have not been able to manage it and have gone into a state of semi-lunacy, eventually ending up in mental hospitals. We call such people the kundalini cracks. Many books have been written about it too, one which is worth reading is by Dr Lee Sannella, *Kundalini – Psychosis or Transcendence?* It speaks of people having this awakening of energy and not being able to manage the awakening of consciousness.

So, the aim of Laya Yoga is to be aware that with the pranic awakening in each chakra there is also an awakening of consciousness, and that this consciousness gives a different perspective, view and vision. It can give birth to a different quality, attribute or guna. Sometimes we may be very tamasic in nature, sometimes we may become rajasic in nature. These different manifestations or cosmic attributes, these *gunas*, should not be taken as a natural state of life.

One should not just say, “Oh, this happens.” There has to be the realization that with pranic awakening the corresponding center in human consciousness is bound to be affected. For example, we have heard that the swadhisthana chakra represents the unconscious mind. Now imagine if swadhisthana is awakened and all of the unconscious stuff comes to the forefront. How are we going to manage it? Through kundalini practices? Not possible, because that would not be an experience from the realm of energy. The

samskaras which we encounter, the karmas which we have to overcome, the impressions which we have to remove, are not simple energy experiences. When mooladhara awakens people begin to experience a lot of sexual energy. That changes the entire attitude and pattern of consciousness. It has to be managed, and Laya Yoga specifically speaks of four instinctive stages of consciousness which have to be managed.

Aspects of Laya Yoga: recognizing the four instincts

The first is sexuality. It is a natural instinct which has been carried into us right from God. In fact this instinct is God himself, or herself, whatever, because without this instinct we would not be here. There is a passage, and I think every tradition and religion has a similar passage, “The desire came in the mind of God, I am one. Let me be many.” The process of becoming many, the process of reproducing oneself, is an instinct of creation. In our material, physical life that instinct of creation manifests in the form of sexuality and the entire universe is geared to stimulate this instinct right from the cosmic level to the social level.

The second instinct is of fear, insecurity. People say, ‘fear of the unknown’, it is fear of changing a known pattern of life, the desire to hang onto something which is known, with which we can identify. If you are a serious practitioner of yoga and you are practising Kriya Yoga or Kundalini Yoga, of course the instinct of fear is bound to come up. When the energies begin to move, a thought will definitely come, “What is happening to me? I don’t want this to happen . . .”, yet you continue with the same practices for higher experience. Fear is another instinct which has to be managed.

Craving, wanting, desiring, the desire for satisfaction, fulfillment: sensorial, sensual, intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual, that is also an instinct. As a natural process we only want good things to happen to us. We don’t want bad things or negative things. That desire for satisfaction, contentment, happiness, fulfillment, is an instinct.

The fourth instinct is of nidra. Nidra is translated as sleep but yogis have recognized nidra as the ‘shut down

time'. It is a natural switch in our personality which stops the human personality from overloading itself with the inputs of the manifest world. It provides the opportunity to process whatever has gone in at an unconscious level, and that unconscious level is physically known as sleep. After sleep, when you wake up in the morning, you feel fresh, ready for another day of hectic activity.

So these are the four instincts which Laya Yoga says change the pattern of the behavior of human consciousness. They have to be managed by a process of knowing, awareness and control. Apart from the instincts there are other active states of consciousness which again have to be managed with the awakening of each psychic center, but we begin with the instinctual level first.

Aspects of Laya Yoga: recognizing the guna

Then we go on to the level of gunas, the tamasic and rajasic manifestations of mind in life. This is how Laya Yoga evolves and while we are coming back to the basics, while we are learning how to manage our instincts, at the same time we need to evolve an understanding of the energy patterns which manifest when a change is taking place in human consciousness. This energy pattern can be seen visually with intensity of concentration. There are some people who have the ability to see the human aura. Just as this ability can be developed, the other ability, to see the change of the energy pattern within our own energy structure, can be developed.

Mooladhara Dhyana and Laya Yoga

So, this ability has also to develop side by side and the practice which we did is a very simple technique for this. Going deep within our body, experiencing mooladhara and observing the energy at mooladhara, we combine it with the chanting of the mantra om. Om is a vibration, and gradually, if you are regular with it, you will notice waves of energy coming up through your body. You will actually feel it physically. There may even come a time when the energy wave takes full control of the physical movements and motions. I have

seen people go into a state of uncontrolled, spontaneous movements. They begin in some states of meditation, you are sitting down, then suddenly you are hopping around the room. The mind is to be sensitised so that it begins to experience that movement and mind is also to be taught to control such chronic movements of energy.

The theory of Laya Yoga is a very beautiful one. Laya Yoga says, “After you have controlled the instincts in the first stage and the gunas in the second stage, in the third stage you have only to control two chakras, mooladhara and vishuddhi.” This is because mooladhara is like the black hole of our personality, where the cosmic energies have come and have focused in the condensed form of matter. That center holds the immense potential to either bind a person totally to the world of the senses or propel one through mooladhara into vishuddhi – from the most dense element of matter to the most subtle element, that of the sky, ether. Vishuddhi is known as the white hole where expansion can take place, where manifestation can take place.

So, a laya yogi gains the ability to dive into mooladhara, bypass all the chakras and re-emerge as a new being in vishuddhi, to re-emerge as a star child. Whoever made the movie *2,001 A Space Odyssey* described the process of Laya Yoga without knowing it – really! Because when that astronaut goes into the black monolith, he is actually sucked into mooladhara. When he re-emerges from it, he is free in space, he is the star child that is emerging from vishuddhi.

Mooladhara and vishuddhi chakras are the two important chakras of human awakening and these are the only two chakras that are dealt with in the final stage of Laya Yoga. I would definitely suggest that you should not be in a hurry to perfect Laya Yoga. Take your time and go through the process slowly and if you are sincere to yourself, in the course of time you will experience the states of Laya Yoga.

Satsang with Yoga Teachers

Before I attempt to answer any of your questions I would like to create some questions in your mind about yoga. We have heard the word yoga a lot, we have an understanding of it and use it in our vocabulary but the question arises, do we really know what yoga is and what it stands for? How do we define yoga? Do we use the word yoga for a group of practices which are physical, mental, spiritual, speculative or conceptual in nature? How does yoga relate to us ordinary people, regardless of the lifestyle that we may lead? I may lead my life as a sannyasin, others may lead their life as householders, or as life members of the human society. It is in this context that we should begin our understanding of yoga.

Yoga is definitely not a set of techniques which were evolved in order to make one lose contact with the external reality, or realities, of the world and just dive into another form of reality which is inner or spiritual. If that was the aim of yoga it would defeat the entire purpose of the evolution of the human mind and consciousness. Yoga recognizes that in each individual there are certain qualities and faculties which are at play. These are the qualities, in the words of our guru Paramahansa Satyananda, of head, heart and hands: intellect, emotion and action.

If we become too heady in our own practice of yoga we are only providing some form of intellectual stimulation to our own life, confirming ideas and speculations which we already carry with us. If we become too emotional and

sensitive with the practices of yoga and neglect the other faculties of the personality, that again defeats the purpose. If we become too involved in the actions which are being performed daily as a routine, without considering the other aspects of our nature and personality, then that also defeats the purpose of yoga. So there should be a process of realizing and integrating the faculties of our body and mind which are at play in the manifest world. The method which can lead to this understanding, this realization, is the yogic system.

Sage Patanjali's definition of yoga

One more thing is that the emphasis of yoga has never been on the experiences of the body, it has never been on the experience of mind, or of the spirit. The emphasis has been on re-educating, restructuring and disciplining the different dimensions of human nature. That is what we find in the initial sutras of the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali.

Let us go back in history for a few moments and imagine that we are sitting in front of Sage Patanjali, who codified the yogic system which is in use presently, and we ask him the question, "What is yoga?" He answers, "*Atha yoga anushasanam*". This is the key sutra which means: *atha*, now; *yoga*, yoga, or the process of harmony; *anushasanam*, a disciplined structure.

If we consider this statement then we will come to understand that when Sage Patanjali uses the word *atha*, he is acknowledging our state of enquiry, our inquisitiveness about a new system, a new practice, a new method, a new structure which can be beneficial for the growth of human nature. If this feeling of enquiry was not within, we would not ask the question, "What is yoga?"

For advanced yogis it also means the actual practice of yoga begins when you have controlled the basic reactions of your nature, body and mind, when you have realized that these are the areas in which you need to work. After having this basic understanding of body and mind the real concept of yoga evolves. Therefore Sage Patanjali says, "Now, through

the practices of yoga, which is being defined as the system by which one can attain harmony in all the dimensions of human existence, it is possible to attain anushasanam". *Anushasanam* means discipline, but more than that it means the ability to govern the subtle aspects of mind. *Shasan* means to govern, to direct or rule and *anu* is a prefix denoting the subtle nature of human personality.

This description of yoga is an appropriate one by all standards. From it we are made aware that it is alright to practise asana, it is alright to practise pranayama, Hatha Yoga and meditation. It is even alright to experience the states of samadhi but the end result of all the practices has to be the ability to control and direct the subtle manifestations and experiences which guide every action, every behavior, every thought and feeling. It is this understanding of yoga which we have to evolve so let us consider this to be the meaning of *yoga* from now on: "A practice by which we gain the ability to control the subtle aspects of human nature and the manifest dimension".

Yoga in relation to lifestyle

If this is yoga, how does it relate to those of us who live in different cultures and countries, and have different commitments in life? Let us look at those people who come to yoga. Sannyasins adopt the yogic practices for their spiritual development. Householders want to gain some insight into their inner nature. Ill people believe yoga can help overcome physical and psychological imbalances and diseases. Stressed-out people believe that it can help manage levels of stress. In this way we find that in every culture, in every country, in every tradition, people who adopt yoga want a specific thing from the practice. Not everyone wants spiritual enlightenment and not everyone wants therapy. Everyone has their own personal areas in which they want to develop and they should adopt a set of practices considering the areas in which they need to evolve.

Swamis may adopt the meditative aspect of yoga. People who need therapy may adopt the physical, postural and

breathing aspect of yoga combined with other techniques. In this way each individual chooses a set of practices for himself or herself which is aimed at filling the void which is experienced in life.

Then there are some people who, as they go deeper into the yoga practices, feel a change in their own pattern of behavior, in their thinking and lifestyle. This change is the result of some form of understanding which is evolving within themselves. Whether we call it realization, understanding or anything else makes no difference. When this understanding evolves, the normal pattern of behavior, thinking and interaction changes. When we become too heady about these changes which we begin to experience, then the intellectual ability takes over the process of change. The intellect rules the process of change by generating some more new desires which take us into new areas of discovery.

This is how the yoga practices keep on evolving in one's life whether we are swamis or householders. This change which one begins to feel internally becomes the motivating factor for going deeper in one's understanding and one's practice. Some people, in the course of time, stop at the level of meditation. They feel that they have come to a point that they don't need to go beyond. Some people come to the point of the practices of Kriya Yoga or Kundalini Yoga and stay there, thinking that just working with the energy structure is going to be enough for them and they don't need to go beyond.

Choosing to go beyond the mind

At a certain stage of our life we stop at one point of yoga, and the moment we stop there, there is no growth. That is understandable because most of the time we try to use our intellect, our analytical ability, to define and rationalize the subtle cognitive experiences. The moment our intellect is unable to rationalize something, the process stops there. So in one way we can say that we work with the area of mind and usually we don't go into the area of 'no mind'. This concept of 'no mind' is also a bit misunderstood, it generates fear. 'No

mind' is generally associated with forms of lunacy, whereas it actually represents the other side of the coin, where one begins to experience the unmanifest forces at work. These unmanifest forces do not relate with the mind structure of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, however the process of yoga is an ongoing process. In the social context it takes different dimensions in the lives of different people.

East and West

We will begin looking at lifestyles, cultures and needs. Let us start with the eastern lifestyle before coming to the western. Historically we can see that in the eastern countries, people developed a nature of self enquiry. They went in and they learned to live according to the laws of nature. In the western civilization, instead of going in, people went out and they discovered ways to make nature suit their feeling and sense of comfort. In the course of time a very big gap came between the two mentalities. In the West we became science-orientated. Science took our mind, awareness and knowledge to the outer dimensions. In the East we became spirit-orientated, not developing the external sciences but evolving some ways and means of experiencing the inner nature.

The practices for experiencing the inner spirit, and yoga is one such practice, evolved in the eastern traditions. When we bring this aspect into a western culture, initially it is difficult for people to appreciate and understand the true nature of yoga. This is because it speaks of certain concepts which are not a natural part of our lifestyle here. It speaks of vairagya, non-attachment. It speaks of viveka, discrimination. Non-attachment and discrimination are not a part of our so-called modern lifestyle.

In discrimination we have to use our mind a lot, the intuitive faculties of the mind, and in the West we have forgotten a lot of the intuitive faculties and gone with, 'A comes before B, B comes before C', and the categorization of events. Things that don't fit into the category are incompatible with our upbringing or, let us say, the programming of our mind. Therefore we find that some practices of yoga have

















been accepted and integrated easily in the western context – the physical aspect. The spiritual aspect has been associated with eastern mysticism, eastern beliefs and religion but that is not correct, it is a big confusion in our mind.

There is no such thing, in my opinion, as eastern mysticism or western mysticism and there should not be, because ultimately it is one human personality which we are dealing with. Asthmatics of America have the same symptoms as asthmatics in China or Japan or India. Diabetics in the U.K. have the same symptoms as diabetics in any other part of the world. Diseases are one because they affect the body, the mind, and the personality in a specific way. In the same way, the inner experiences of every person are all one. The processes of the growth of the human mind, whether in the East or in the West, are one. The only thing is, we have to understand the level at which we are functioning at present.

Recognizing one's own starting point

In the western environment we function more at the level of buddhi, in the eastern environment we function more at the level of chitta. So if you function more in the level of buddhi, intellect, then we have to evolve from that point, use that as a launching pad and consider the other aspects of manas, chitta and ahamkara. If we function predominantly from the level of chitta, then we use the other side of the picture as the launching pad and consider the aspects of buddhi, manas and ahamkara.

As we are able to harmonize these different areas of our personality, the growth which is experienced and the psychic expression which will eventually manifest, will be one and the same in both kinds of people. Now every individual is guided by the SWAN principle, 'SWAN' meaning aspects of human nature: strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. Every individual has a group of abilities which are known as strengths. They could be creativity, strong will power in the positive sense, conviction, determination and so on. The weaknesses can be fears, inhibitions, lack of will power, loss of self image and so on. Ambitions can be external, internal,

social, the desire for name, status, recognition. Needs are also physical, social, emotional and so on.

We move from one structure of SWAN into the next at an incredible pace, so fast that we are unable to differentiate between our strengths and ability, our weaknesses, our desires or ambitions and our needs. We tend to mix them up completely. Often ambition becomes a need without our realizing it, and it totally controls our performance in external life. Often need becomes a weakness, or it can even become a strength. Therefore it becomes logically difficult to understand what is actually happening deep down in our personality. This is the time when we come into conflict with ourselves, we don't have clarity of mind. Thought and the brain is overloaded, mind and emotions are overloaded and then there is nervous breakdown, short circuit.

Whether one is an easterner or a westerner, initially, along with the practices of yoga, there has to evolve an understanding of the faculties or areas of strength, weakness, ambitions and need. Without this awareness you cannot have the ability to govern yourself. If you wish to direct, control and guide the subtle expressions of your personality then awareness has to be extended into these areas. So, along with the normal practices of yoga there is another aspect which needs to develop side by side, which can happen through a meditative process.

You have to work as per the needs of the body and the requirements of society. Yoga is not a discipline which denies looking after yourself. It is not a system of penance. It is not a system of renunciation. Sannyasa is. I, as a sannyasin, other people as sannyasins, have to work to overcome their desires and in some cases there has to be a very firm denial of some situations in life. Sannyasa is different from yoga. In yoga there is no denial. In yoga there is acceptance, understanding and application. Accept yourself as you are and work from that point on. Understand your own nature, strengths and weaknesses, and work from that point onwards. Apply what you know to evolve yourself. These are the main theories and practices of yoga.

Yoga and one's own dharma

If you consider these to be the main theories of yoga then there should not be any conflict in the mind of anyone about the use, application and practice of yoga. Now, in the normal lifestyle of a householder there is not much difference between East and West in this sense; there are certain commitments which need to be fulfilled and managed. Yoga does not interfere with fulfilling these commitments or needs. Yoga does not say don't look after your children, don't work for their security in the future, rather awareness of human commitment is another major aspect of yoga which is known as dharma.

One has to know what one's dharma is. *Dharma* does not mean religion but commitment to the process of attaining total fulfillment. When we are walking from Satyananda Yoga Centre to catch the tube or the bus, the body is at that moment performing its dharma; the dharma of walking. So dharma is a natural expression of the faculties of the self in order to reach a state of fulfillment and contentment. In English it can be called commitment, duty or obligation. By being aware of one's dharma to family, friends, society and the world, we work and contribute creatively for their growth and development.

If this aspect of dharma is not added to yoga, then yoga will hold no meaning whatever for the practitioner. One has to know what are the dharmas of the present lifestyle and live accordingly. Realization of one's dharma will reduce the confusion and conflict which conditions our understanding of mysticism. The theoretical traditions of religions, of spirituality, are never accurate because they are creations of the human mind which is being moved and influenced by the prevailing environmental situations, events and circumstances, and even by the power of people. Yoga goes for personal experience. As yoga teachers, sannyasins, or would-be sannyasins, we must maintain clear in our own mind the definition of yoga, the role of dharma in yoga, the awareness of the various traits of human personality and how they are to be managed with the practices of yoga. If we can do this

we shall be able to contribute positively to the upliftment of human society. If we can't, we won't be able to contribute to our own growth, let alone human society's.

Yoga has importance in providing coherence, meaning, reality and unity for many householders carrying out their earthly duties. As part of this duty is to feed and protect children, yoga must recognize we are a people living on Earth. If it is to lead us to an emotional, spiritual relationship with the Goddess, it must recognize this duty and our economic interests and obligation to planetary survival, our children's future. Critics of yoga suggest it is a middle class hobby, or that in India it supports the caste system. How much does yoga encourage seekers to provide an equitable economic reality, as in Buddhism, where we as a people can support, provide for and protect our children, thus carrying out our duty? How much does yoga encourage seekers to struggle against the destroyers of the Earth? In this sense how evolutionary, revolutionary or re-evolutionary is yoga?

I think we have dealt with quite a few of these questions – the part about “earthly duty”, which is dharma. Now, the part about, “critics of yoga suggest it is a middle class hobby or that in India it supports the caste system”. Well, I have seen all over the world that people are only critics if they are without any knowledge or understanding of what something stands for. Most of the critics who may say things like this, or critics in India who say things about the western system, are people who have never encountered or studied or looked into or developed an understanding of what the other person is trying to do or say. So ignore the critic totally. They simply read four books and then write another ten books which reflect their own mental confusion. If someone has an open mind, an inquisitive mind, then they would never become critics, they would always be seekers.

The last question was, “How much does yoga encourage seekers to struggle against the destroyers of the Earth?” Yoga does not say that you should form a movement and go around

with banners and slogans, it says one should be an example first. There is a statement in the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali which in my opinion will answer this question: “Be friendly to those who are happy. Be compassionate to those who are suffering and in pain. Be happy for those who are virtuous and don’t be bothered by those who are crooked.” If you can follow the first principles of friendship, compassion and happiness, if these qualities evolve in your own life and you become an example of them, the crooked have no option but to be influenced by your example and to change their lifestyle.

God has given you a beautiful example in your own mouth. The tongue, which is soft, is surrounded by thirty two warriors who are very sharp and give a big bite. Now, the single tongue outlasts all the warriors. True enough? All the thirty two warriors fall down in the course of time and the tongue, which has always been a gentle pacifist (well I’m talking of the tongue, not of speech) with its soft and simple quality, eventually overcomes the hard and negative qualities.

People do radiate peace when they reach this level of being. There are examples of animals with extreme natures who forget their natural habits when they come into the environment of a yogi or an ashram. A tiger and a lamb can both drink from the same pot and forget their animosity and fear of each other. The power of the spirit is very strong. If we are sincere in our commitment to yoga then the subtle change can influence and alter the whole human society. This has happened. It is not a fantasy. It happens, but when it happens we tend to see it out there and not experience it ourselves and therefore we are unable to experience that harmony. If we are sincere and if we make an effort to experience that inner, spiritual harmony then the whole world will change. It is not a myth, it can become a reality.

Please give us some insight into what Paramahansa Satyananda is doing now and what he will be doing in the future.

Just to give you an idea of the mind of Paramahamsaji – you know when we were celebrating the Convention in 1993, we

requested that he give us a message. That message depicts his state of mind and if you can understand that message you will understand his life totally.

*Niranjan,
Namo Narayan,*

I send my good wishes for the convention. You call it Tyaga Jyanti. I call it Samarpan Mahotshav – the moment of dedication. It was that time and auspicious moment of my life, which I experienced fifty years ago in the divine presence of my guru Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. To this day I have always remembered it as a great moment of dedication. You will be able to help the movement of yoga and dedicate yourself to the great cause of human evolution.

The main message in this is, he called that moment, which we were calling the moment of renunciation, the moment of dedication, and he says he has always remembered that moment of dedication, the moment he surrendered himself to his guru. Now, in our lives, the moment of beginning is always overshadowed by the moment of achievement.

If you get a degree, that is the important thing, the achievement, so you can have it framed nicely and put it on top of the fireplace for everyone to see, ‘Look what I have attained. Look what I have become.’ In his life what he had become was not, and is not, important at all. In his life, the moment he started on the journey with the inspiration of his guru is the most important one, not what he became later on.

The birth is important and continuity is important, not stability, stagnation and death. So where we tend to identify with our egos and our achievements, he has identified with surrender and the moment of dedication. Imagine if you had to write a message. You would be saying, ‘Thank you very much for celebrating my fifty years of renunciation, I appreciate it very much.’

This has made me think about what the qualities of a guru are. It is important for a person who reaches the position of a guru to be egoless because being a guru is not

due to a degree or a diploma, it is an imposition caused by the ideas of the followers. Until the birth of offspring makes you a father or a mother you are not a father or mother. Once the offspring is born then naturally and automatically you become a father or a mother. So when disciples begin to relate to teachers, the teachers automatically become gurus. Actually, in their own personal life they are never gurus, they are always disciples of their own guru. It is that identity, vision and inspiration which remains alive in them and keeps on guiding them.

The moment we think we have become gurus we lose that individual, or self, awareness. We get caught up in playing different roles by losing knowledge of what we are. When Paramahamsaji left he said very clearly, “I am only a disciple. I was never a guru. You people have made me a guru but I have never considered myself to be one. I have always considered myself to be a wanderer, somebody who is walking on the path.” We can see that during his walk, during his journey, many people followed him. When the fork in the road came, he went on his own journey while we continued on ours, and we started calling out to him, “Hey! You are going the wrong way!”, because we were going in another direction.

Well, where he established himself eventually is a place which is known as Deoghar. It is about 140 kilometers from Munger. It is one of the poorest areas of the entire country. How he came there is another story, I won't go into that, but there, another organization known as Sivananda Math is actively helping to develop the community of that region. Sivananda Math is a social charitable organization devoted to the principles of Swami Sivananda: service, love, compassion and charity. The work which is done by this movement in the region is providing shelter to the shelterless people, employment to the unemployed, education to the uneducated and medical help to those who need it.

The buildings are made from compressed earth, rammed earth bricks which are in tune with the topography of the land. They are donated freely to the shelterless families. In each

family, the eldest is provided with employment, the youngest with education and the entire family with free medical support. The swamis are involved physically in this work. We make our own bricks, we make our own houses, beautiful five star mud homes. In this way a social awakening is also taking place in the region where Paramahamsaji is performing his sadhana now, and only the future will tell where we will go next.

In the sannyasa tradition, do grace and self effort have equal parts to play or is one more significant than the other?

Sannyasa, grace and self effort; well, self effort is the first step in the experience of grace. Grace is a state of fulfillment where one is in tune with the will of the divine and the divine will guides the life of the aspirant. In order to come to that level where grace is manifesting, one has to tune one's own nature to be a recipient of the divine grace. In order to be the recipient one has to go through self effort.

Sadhana is the aspect of self effort. Practice, awareness and application, these are the three aspects of effort. With them we can reach a state of harmony within and then we begin to realize that divine grace controls the whole life and destiny. Initially we may lack the ability to flow with life. In our quest for contentment, satisfaction, fulfillment and enjoyment we struggle with life. Teaching us how not to struggle and how to flow is the aim of every spiritual tradition in the world, whether it is eastern or western it does not really matter.

We have become self centered. We have become self oriented. We identify with our ambitions, our aspirations, likes and dislikes. As long as that self oriented identification is there, how are we going to accept the validity of divine grace? At this level it is only an intellectual or even conceptual process, we can think about it but we cannot know it, we cannot experience it. Grace has to be experienced. It is not something to think about, effort is to be done. So effort is the first stage in the process of experiencing grace.

Swamiji, could you comment on Sage Patanjali's chapter two, verses one and two, in relation to tapas, swadhyaya and ishwara pranidhana.

Let us direct this question to the general audience. The yamas are the first stage of yoga according to Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*. They represent purification and harmonization of the human mind before coming to the realization of divinity in our life. What are the yamas? There are said to be five yamas in the Raja Yoga tradition:

1. *satya*, establishing oneself in truth
2. *ahimsa*, absence of negativity from within
3. *aparigraha*, happiness with whatever is there without any desire for more, non-accumulation
4. *asteya*, which is translated as not stealing, and this not stealing is not a social act, it is an inner state in which one is true to oneself, where one does not hide from oneself
5. *brahmacharya*, which is not celibacy, it is being established in the nature of Brahman, the expanding consciousness.

Then there are five niyamas which are:

1. *saucha*, experiencing the inner purity, cleanliness
2. *santosha*, contentment, being happy in the present state of life, perfecting the present, not worrying about the future nor thinking about the past
3. *swadhyaya*, self study, awareness of what is going on in the subtle levels of human nature and personality, self analysis
4. *tapas*, a process of transcendence through continued effort, experiencing the force of evolution in life
5. *ishwara pranidhana*, surrendering to the divine will by realizing it is that cosmic energy, which flows within us.

These *yamas* and *niyamas* represent states of human personality. They are not disciplines. Externally, in order to imbibe them and make them an inherent part of our nature, we need to practise them in our life in whatever way possible, but eventually they become states of inner experience. They provide a sense of purity, harmony and an experience of unity, union of the individual being with the cosmic being. Yamas and niyamas represent the transformed personality which can be attained through the practices of yoga.

After the description of yama and niyama, Sage Patanjali describes the physical and mental practices of asana, pranayama, pratyahara and dharana. These are efforts, practices which need to be perfected in order to experience the states of yama and niyama, and which ultimately lead to the states of dhyana and samadhi. So tapas, swadhyaya and ishwara pranidhana are not imposed disciplines, and they are not routines of a spiritual aspirant, rather they are the natural outcome of attaining inner harmony. Therefore they have to be understood in a different context in relation to our inner life.

Ishwara pranidhana, which is the last of the yamas and niyamas, is of course the highest, because there the concept of duality, of I and others, of ego, is destroyed, dissolved. The eternal knowledge that the divine and I are one manifests and becomes a living experience, not an intellectual experience. So ishwara pranidhana, in the final stage, is the stage of samadhi. Even satya, the first of the yamas, in the final stage is an experience of samadhi when one becomes established in truth. Swadhyaya, self study or self awareness, is an all pervading knowledge of the individual and the cosmic self gained in the stages of samadhi.

So please remember that yamas and niyamas, in whatever form we may accept them, acknowledge them and practise them in our life do not represent, and never have represented, an external discipline to be followed. Rather they are natural abilities which one gains with the transformation and purification of consciousness.

Laya Yoga Meditation

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Loka Dhyana

Adjust yourself physically so that you can be comfortable and relaxed in your meditative sitting posture for at least twenty minutes.

Make sure that there are no tensions, make sure you are comfortable and at ease with yourself and with your body.

There should be nothing tight.

Observe yourself internally.

Become aware of your body internally from the head to the toes.

Center yourself in your body. Be aware of the state of comfort and relaxation.

Breathe in deeply and then chant om with me three times altogether, then the shanti mantras are to be repeated.

Become aware of the space within the body, the all-pervasive space.

Feel the body to be an empty shell and within the empty shell, the experience of space.

Space which extends from the top of the head right down to the toes.

Observe. Observe yourself with total awareness. Observe the space within the body.

As you go deeper into the experience of space, gradually drop the external identification, the external awareness of the environment,

the world around you and even drop the awareness of the physical body. Remain aware of all-pervasive space.

As you identify more with space and less with the physical body, you will have a sensation of floating – floating in air.

With the sensation of floating there will be the experience of inner silence and stillness.

During the practice, if at any time you feel the need to move the body you may do so, but the physical movement should be slow and with awareness, and keep your attention fixed on the practice.

Do not let the sounds distract you. Do not let the physical experiences distract your attention. Maintain constant and continuous awareness, with each passing moment go deeper within yourself, within the space of the body.

Be aware of the sensation of floating. Gradually disassociate yourself from the physical experiences of comfort and discomfort, aches and pains, states of relaxation and ease, and only be aware of floating in inner space, feeling the motionlessness of the space within, silence of the space within. The body is just an empty shell with a covering of skin. Beneath the covering of the body exists eternal space.

The space which is being experienced is consciousness. Be aware of the field of consciousness.

Do not identify with the mind.

Do not identify with the mental experiences.

Do not identify with thoughts, with intellect, with feelings. Just be aware, observe the field of consciousness.

Consciousness, which is infinite at the microcosmic level and also infinite at the macrocosmic level.

Only awareness in the form of an observer, the drashta, the sakshi, the seer, remains.

Awareness which is part of individuality, the drashta or the seer, the observer which represents individual perception. Observing, witnessing the field of consciousness extending in all directions of the known manifest universe and the unknown unmanifest universe.

We are going to begin the practice of meditation by again chanting the mantra om; continuous short oms are to be

chanted with each exhalation. As we chant the short mantras, feel the vibrations of the mantra pervading the entire space of consciousness physically and also in the subtle dimension. The whole being vibrates, the whole being resonates with the chanting of om. Experience the vibration of om resonating in each and every part of the inner space – the microcosmic space of consciousness. The drashta, the seer, is experiencing waves of vibration extending in all directions in the field of consciousness. We begin.

Om Om Om Om Om . . .

Experience, observe whatever sensations there may be in the space of consciousness pervading the whole body.

Remain silent and observe the play of energy instead of harmony or even instead of disarray – experience whatever may be the sensation within the field of consciousness.

Now, within the space which is being observed you are going to visualize two centers of energy. One in the region of mooladhara and another in the region of vishuddhi. At the base of the spine is one luminous center and in the region of the throat is another luminous center. Develop awareness of the energy centers in the inner space by becoming aware of them one by one. Focus your mind in the region of mooladhara and observe the center of energy glowing, radiant, in the region of mooladhara.

Intensify awareness of the mooladhara center, mooladhara chakra, which in the dimension of consciousness is represented by bhuh loka.

The other center is the region of vishuddhi – bright, brilliant, luminous, radiating light. In the field of consciousness this center is known as janah loka.

These are the two centers in the space of consciousness, the bhuh loka and the janah loka, which you should now observe. The bhuh loka in the mooladhara region is not a chakra, rather it represents the dimension of consciousness within the chakra. The janah loka in the region of vishuddhi is not the vishuddhi chakra but it is the space of consciousness within the vishuddhi chakra.

These two lokas are connected to each other by two passages. One which extends from the mooladhara area, the bhuh loka, to the vishuddhi area, the janah loka, along the spinal cord. The other passage extends down from janah loka to bhuh loka along the frontal passage.

Between these two centers the awareness is going to ascend and descend with the help of inhalation and exhalation. At the time of inhalation the consciousness ascends from bhuh loka to janah loka along the spinal passage and at the time of exhalation the consciousness descends from janah loka to bhuh loka along the frontal passage, the front part of the body.

Be aware of this movement of consciousness between bhuh loka and janah loka from the regions of mooladhara to the regions of vishuddhi, and then down. The ascending consciousness is known as arohan, along the spinal passage, and the descending consciousness is known as awarehan along the frontal passage.

Intensify the awareness of movement from bhuh to janah loka and from janah to bhuh loka.

There is no movement of energy, there is no experience of energy moving, only the movement of consciousness, of awareness, the drashta, moving from one loka to the other with the help of inhalation and exhalation.

Remain observant of the process and try to merge your awareness more and more into the experience of movement in the field of consciousness.

Bhuh loka represents the dimension of consciousness in the world of matter and janah loka represents the dimension of consciousness in the world of space.

We are going to stop this practice at this level.

Let go of the sakshi awareness, the drashta awareness of the lokas and the passages connecting the two lokas. Become aware of the state of being.

Slowly become aware of your body, the solidity of your body, the physical body.

Become aware of the different parts of the body and gradually begin to externalize your awareness into the physical body and into the external environment.

Breathe in deeply and chant om three times with me.
Gently rub the palms together and place the palms on top of
the eyes, and then slowly open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat

There are various levels in which we need to develop our sensitivity. The first level for developing the sensitivity was in the level of chakras, becoming aware of their energy fields, becoming aware of energy fields moving around the body. This awareness can be gained by the practices of Kundalini and Kriya Yoga and their allied practices.

After having come to this stage of recognizing the movement of energy within, we enter the Laya Yoga aspect. Here also we move from one stage to the next. Firstly we become aware of the natural instincts which govern the functions of body and mind. Secondly, we recognize the manifestation of gunas and the responses of the mind and ego to the gunas. Thirdly, we develop an awareness of the dimensions of consciousness which are known as lokas.

Let us first look at these three areas in brief. It is to be inferred that we have come to a state of perfection in our practices of Kundalini or Kriya Yoga and that in this process of chakra awareness and chakra awakening, the energies which begin to manifest create certain changes in the normal patterns of behavior. Psychically, the instinctive consciousness becomes active. With the awakening of the chakras the four basic instincts: of reproduction, which is known as *maithuna*, of insecurities and fears which is known as *bhaya*, of *ahara*, the urge for fulfillments, and of withdrawing in the form of *nidra*, are experienced.

Redirecting instinctive energy by controlling the five vayus

Tantra says that the energy which is being manifested at the time of the rise of our instinctive consciousness has to be channelled and sublimated. The emphasis of tantra is on sublimation of energy. This sublimation, when we combine the tantric system with the yogic system, begins at the mooladhara level. At the level of energy we try to change the

flow of pranas or *vayus* with the practise of different bandhas and mudras. In order to raise the sexual energy up, the practices of *moolbandha* and *nasikagra drishti*, gazing at the tip of the nose, are the two important practices. Those people who feel intense sexuality in the course of their awakening can control the drive, and not only control but reverse the flow of that downward flowing energy by the practices of *moolbandha*, *nasikagra drishti*, *sahajoli mudra* and other mudras which reverse the flow of apana vayu.

I am sure you must be familiar with the theory of the five *vayus* or pranas? They are five different aspects of energy governing and controlling different physical activities as well as mental, psychic and spiritual activities. The first manifestation of *maha prana*, the cosmic energy, is in the region between the throat and the rib cage and is known as *prana vayu*. It is an upward moving force responsible for the maintenance of the organs that are located there, such as the lungs, the heart. It is responsible for the process of life, the ability to live. If we stop breathing or if the heart stops beating, then we are finished, these two are vital organs. We can live with a kidney failure but we cannot live with a stopped heart. We can live with liver damage but we cannot live if the lungs are kaput. So, this is the function of prana vayu in the physical body and it controls the energies of anahata chakra and vishuddhi chakra.

The second major prana is *apana vayu*, located between the navel and the perineum. It is a downward moving force responsible for elimination of these toxins from the body:

1. *vata*, air, which is eliminated when we pass wind,
2. *pitta*, the digestive enzymes and fluids which have to be eliminated efficiently otherwise they will eat into our own digestive system,
3. *kapha*, the mucous formation in the body which is like the grease of the internal organs; without proper greasing the organs will malfunction.

It also eliminates the normal toxins which we take from outside into our body.

The third major prana is the *samana vayu*, which is situated between the navel and the ribcage. It is responsible for digestion and the assimilation of energy from matter which we eat.

The state of consciousness related with awakening mooladhara

Here we are concerned with the downward moving force of apana which is the force which also controls sexuality. When apana is reversed through the practise of bandhas after the awakening of mooladhara, then the sexual drive is channelled and at that time the energy begins to rise up. At the same time there is a change in the normal pattern of consciousness which is experienced in the form of sensory, sensual attraction. That attraction is then observed internally in the process of meditation in Laya Yoga. Attraction to a person of the opposite sex – how the desires, how the feelings, how the sensations change and what kind of pull there is when the energy of this instinct is active, this process of observation happens in Laya Yoga meditation.

This attraction is then balanced out by the process of viveka, discrimination. Viveka is important here because it is the power of observation which can make a distinction between a spiritual need and a sensual need. Many times we confuse a sensual need with a spiritual need and a spiritual need with a sensual need. Viveka is important in order to differentiate between the two.

The state of consciousness related with awakening swadhisthana

After that we move into a level of fears and insecurities. Whenever they manifest you will feel a tightening in the stomach, that's a typical swadhisthana reaction. If there is fear you will see an immediate contraction of the abdominal muscles and tightening, tensing up, of the body. Insecurity gives the same tightening. Anything which deals with changing a pattern in which we are comfortable will create this sensation of tightening. We don't want to let go of a

state of energy or consciousness which is adjusted according to our mentality, or environment. Whenever a break has to happen, that break, in the form of insecurity, will manifest in the swadhisthana area.

At that time, again the practices of bandhas and kriyas help release the blocked up energy. They release the force of the concentrated energy from swadhisthana. The bandhas and kriyas which help are: *uddiyana bandha*, *agnisar kriya* and *navli kriya*, the moving and churning of the stomach muscles. Externally these three practices help to control manifestations and expressions of fear, insecurity or any kind of mental, emotional or energy imbalance. At the level of consciousness, again through the process of meditation, we have to bring about a balance in the disrupted state of consciousness so that we can observe the fear which is related to one particular samskara and also to one particular karma. In the system of Laya Yoga, fear has different layers of expression: physical, organic, pranic, samskaras and karmas.

Fear at the level of samskara and karma

Now how does a fear relate to a samskara? Samskara is the conditioning of our nature to react or respond in a certain way. Our personality is conditioned to respond in a certain way by this internal mechanism of response which is unconscious in nature. Samskaras are always unconscious in nature, we are never aware of them until they have passed and then we say, "Oh, this was a samskara." The unconscious response is triggered off at any instant by any movement or alteration in the field of the unconscious mind. One example is if you are walking at night and there is a piece of rope on the ground. You see it and jump back. Why? Because the image comes of a snake, and generally that image of a snake is always deadly. You know it could be an ordinary poisonless snake, but the image will be of a striking cobra or something of that sort, always the terrible aspect. How did that reaction happen? Why did the thought not come that it could be a piece of rope? Why did you immediately jump back? Why was there absolutely no rationality? That is a conditioning of mind.

People call it the self-preservation instinct. Psychologists may call it that, yoga disagrees. It could be an aspect of the self-preservation instinct but at the same time it is a samskara of the unconscious mind. This samskara is again related with a karma; karma representing the control of destiny over a human being.

Some people ask, “What is the difference between karma and destiny?” I’m not going to go into this subject, but just to give you an idea, imagine that there is a sheep or a goat. We tie that goat to a stake in the ground with a piece of rope that is twenty feet long. The goat can move in a circle whose diameter is forty feet, but the moment it tries to go beyond the space allowed by the rope, it can’t. Something will hold it back. Now, whether you move within one foot of the stake or five or six feet makes no difference because, naturally, there is the possibility for you to move up to twenty feet. How much you move in life is determined by destiny which is like this twenty foot long rope. How much you actually move represents your own particular pattern of behavior at that time, which represents the karma. It is interlinked.

So fear, which is being generated at the physical level, travels right up to the karmic level. This fear has to be managed with the practices of Jnana Yoga, intense, keen observation and analysis of, “What is the nature of my inner self interacting with samskaras and karmas.” Jnana Yoga is not asking, “Who am I?” Even God has had an identity crisis. God can’t answer, “Who am I?”. You know, after the World Cup, the football, God went to a psychiatrist. He said, “I’m having an identity crisis.” The psychiatrist said, “Why?”, God said, “I don’t even know what I am now. When Italy wins, they say God is Italian. When the Brazilians win, they say God is Brazilian. I don’t know to whom I belong.” You see, even God suffers from an identity crisis.

Jnana Yoga is not the questioning aspect, asking yourself, “Who am I?”. Rather it is developing a keen perception and knowledge of the state which you are experiencing at present and its interaction with samskaras and karmas at different levels. This Jnana Yoga, through the process of self enquiry,

self analysis and self observation, irons out the creases which we develop while struggling with our samskaras and karmas.

The state of consciousness related with awakening manipura

Then we move onto the next level, the desire for satisfaction, for fulfillment. This desire is physical as well as psychological, combining mental-emotional as well as spiritual. A spiritual desire can be a positive one but nevertheless it is a desire and desires always represent a limited vision. They do not represent a broad vision. They represent one pointed attraction towards something and even in spiritual life, this one pointed attraction for a positive thing has to be removed.

There is a very famous saying by Buddha, “If you want to attain nirvana, then you have to give up the desire to attain nirvana.” As long as the desire is there you won’t be able to attain, so even the positive desire has to be finished. Observing the desires, the passions, the intense cravings which are meant for self fulfillment and self satisfaction can be achieved by the process of pratyahara, where we are observing different areas of the mind, like in antar mouna.

What do we do in antar mouna? We observe the thoughts. We pick up one thought and follow it to the source and then we leave that one. We pick up another thought and follow that to the source, once we come to the source we leave it. We pick up a third one and follow that to the source and then leave it. In this way the various expressions of our nature are observed, and with recognition, the moment we are able to follow them to the source, their intensity is finished. When you know the process of how they work, they cease to have any attraction because then something better always comes into the picture.

Thoughts, feelings, emotions, desires, they are like toys. As long as you don’t have them you want them. Once you have them there is satisfaction, then, “Oh, I have that now. Now I want this one.” The pratyahara system is a very good technique in order to overcome this craving, this desire for self fulfillment and satisfaction.

The state of consciousness related with awakening anahata

Then we come to the aspect of nidra, the disconnection of the mind from the world of objects. This is a very interesting subject. Nidra, in the physical sense, has been defined as sleep, something we do everyday. Nidra in the mental sense has been defined as relaxation, a state in which we relax our mind and make it fresh. Nidra in the psychic sense has been defined as an individual disconnecting himself or herself from the inputs of the senses. The process of managing nidra has been considered to be a state of pratyahara in yoga, in the psychic sense. We find the technique of yoga nidra, for example, in which we go into a state where we are neither sleeping nor awake and from that state we are a witness of what is happening.

Beyond the initial stages of yoga nidra, in the deeper psychic level, is disconnection of the individual mind from the manifest dimension and reconnection with the cosmic mind. In this sense, yoga nidra becomes a meditative process. Traditionally there are eighty different stages of yoga nidra. Right now we are trying to write down all the eighty stages and hopefully a complete book on yoga nidra will come out, dealing with the levels of pratyahara, the levels of dharana and finally dealing with the levels of dhyana. So nidra becomes a process of reconnecting the individual mind with the cosmic mind and this is where the instinctive levels are finished, transcended, managed.

Managing the three gunas

Then we move into the level of *gunas*, the attributes, and this is a very simple process. Management of gunas comes with awareness of them. What is the prevalent, predominant guna in my life right now? Just observe yourself for one minute. Don't think it is sattwa guna because you are sitting in a positive environment. The predominant guna, as far as I can see in this room, is 70% rajasic and 30% tamasic, including me, because our minds are interacting at a different levels. Externally we may feel very comfortable and happy and have this nice vibe, but deep inside, beyond the external, superficial

awareness of the quality of the environment, the predominant gunas are rajasic. You have to know the different levels of mental interaction in order to be able to judge what guna is predominant at present.

These gunas create a different form of interaction of mind with itself, of mind with the senses, of the senses with the different inner experiences of pleasures and pains, desires, likes and dislikes, attractions and repulsions, etc. So by the time we come to work in the level of the gunas, it is implied that we have already gone through learning the process of management of the instincts. Only then can we have total knowledge of the gunas in one vision and have the ability, the strength and the energy to change them at any given moment. After working with the gunas, when we gain the ability to alter them at will, we then actually enter into the dimension of consciousness.

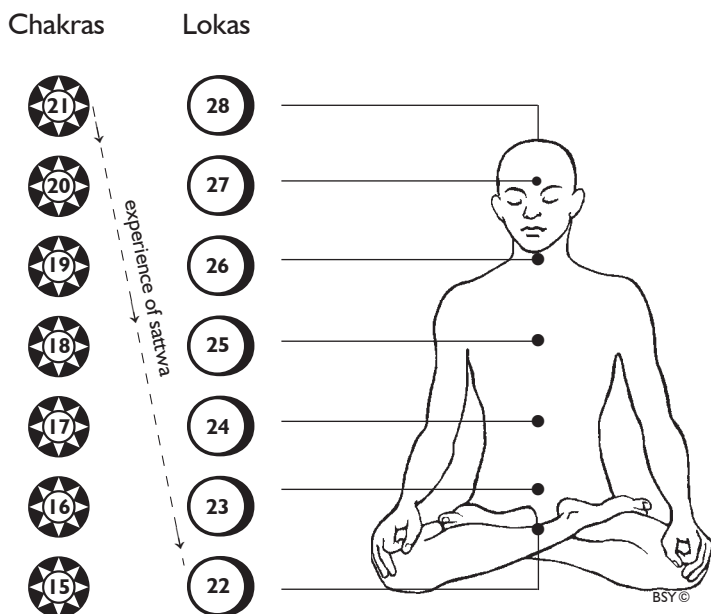
Awareness of lokas after managing the instincts and gunas

From here we move on to pure consciousness. In the level of pure consciousness we begin with the lokas. In some systems of yoga, lokas have been described parallel to the chakras. Some have even bunched the lokas and chakras together. According to the Tantras, there are twenty-eight dimensions of consciousness and we are in the levels of fifteen and beyond. The fifteenth level of consciousness begins at mooladhara. There is a very interesting connection. The fifteenth to the eighteenth: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura and anahata, represent the instinctive consciousness. The nineteenth to the twentyfirst: vishuddhi, ajna and sahasrara, represent the gunas: tamasic, rajasic and sattwa.

Then begin the seven lokas: *bhuh loka*, *bhuvah loka*, *swah loka*, *mahah loka*, *janah loka*, *tapah loka* and *satya loka*. Loka is like saying 'chakra': mooladhara chakra, swadhisthana chakra, manipura chakra and so on. So *lokas* means dimensions of consciousness, *chakras* mean centers of energy.

So, seven higher dimensions of consciousness exist beyond sahasrara. Sahasrara represents the pure sattwa nature in our normal life. Bhuh loka represents the refined state of

15th to 28th Levels of Consciousness



Chakras	Instincts/Gunas	Lokas
15 – Mooladhara	Maithuna sexuality, security	22 – Bhuh
16 – Swadhisthana	Bhaya fear, joy	23 – Bhuvah
17 – Manipura	Ahara satisfaction, desire	24 – Svah
18 – Anahata	Nidra sleep	25 – Mahah
19 – Vishuddhi	Tamas	26 – Janah
20 – Ajna	Rajas	27 – Tapah
21 – Sahasrara	Sattwa	28 – Satyam

consciousness in mooladhara after clearing the instincts and arriving at that sattwa state connected with sahasrara. The final, seventh loka, satya loka, represents the dimension where reality in its true form is experienced. In the *Bible* they talk about the seven veils. Now, people say they represent the chakras but actually they don't represent the chakras because in the final stage there is nothing but light and that light is the final experience of reality, satya, the true nature. That true nature of consciousness is the satya loka, so the description in the *Bible* is not related with the chakras, it is related with the lokas.

Below our level, which begins at fifteen, there are fourteen other levels which are known as *patalas*, from the eighth to the fourteenth, and below them the *narakas* from first to seventh. The patala level is manifesting in animal life where everything is governed by instincts, not just the four basic ones, but every action and every response to a situation is by instinct. The lower ones below that, the narakas, can be related with vegetable life, for our understanding. Of course they don't really relate with vegetable life, but that will help with our understanding for now. There even the instincts are not fully active, only a dormant conscious state is being experienced. So we are lucky that we've become the fifteenth onwards so we only have fourteen more to cover! This is the concept of lokas in Laya Yoga.

The path of Laya Yoga

As I mentioned yesterday, Laya Yoga, in the course of time, aims to dissolve and merge one stage of consciousness with a second, the second with a third, the third with a fourth and so on, so that all the distinctions are finished. That is the state of final dissolution. From the first loka to the sixth, the experience of consciousness is in the form of altered states of consciousness and the seventh experience is of the fixed, permanent state of consciousness.

In relation to the chakras, from mooladhara to ajna, we experience the altered states of energy, the quality, strengths and weaknesses of the different chakras. All these changes

represent the transition of energy from one stage to the next. Only in sahasrara is the permanent state of energy, the pure state of energy, experienced. So sahasrara chakra and satya loka are the only two centers which are, by nature, permanent, one representing the pure state of energy, the other representing the pure state of consciousness.

Coming to this point of laya, total dissolution, is eventually the aim of human existence. We will come to that naturally in the course of time by a spontaneous process of evolution. From a people who lived in caves and wore skins, we have come to this level where we are able to manipulate nature and the environment according to our need. In 2,000, 3,000 or 10,000 years, with natural change as per the laws of evolution, we will be moving on to other layers. Evolution is taking us that way whether you like it or not. You cannot remain fixed in one state of life.

Those people who are brave can, through practice, reach the state of laya, and it is the road where the angels fear to tread. We are not hoping to become angels, eventually we hope to become one with God. This is the basic concept of Laya Yoga.

In the meditation practice we were asked to move the consciousness without moving the energy within. From what I could perceive it was very difficult not to involve energy because of the pure fact that when you bring your mind anywhere, you feel the energy. I can be the witness of it but I cannot push it back. That is my problem.

You're right. Initially it happens because we have conditioned ourselves to feel the movement of the energy. Usually there are different experiences when we observe and feel the movement of energy and maybe I should describe to you our meditation practice so that you can understand it better.

We started off by saying to visualize two points of light, in the region of mooladhara and vishuddhi, and went on to develop an awareness that they are not chakras, but lokas, dimensions of consciousness within the field of a chakra energy. Now this was the first practice in the experience

of lokas. As you go into advanced practices of the loka experience it will become clear. The loka is always perceived to be a still form in the center, while around that still form there is a movement of energy. If you see how a bullock cart moves in India then this concept will become clear to you. The wheel is rotating on an axis which is totally firm and still. The same principle applies with motor cars, though outside we see the hub cap moving so it is not something which is visible, but in bullock carts it is visible. The central axis which is still, is the consciousness and there is movement of energy all around. So that is how, in other practices, we experience the lokas and the chakras around them.

Later on, the passage which we begin to observe is seen in two forms: one as the movement of energy and the other as the continuous expression of one consciousness from one dimension into the next. There is an example with fibre optics. If you shine light at one end, the same intensity of light will be there at the other end, there is no loss, whereas if it was a transfer of energy there would be loss because of the movement. If there is transfer of consciousness there is no loss, it is a continuity, the same intensity is maintained.

In the subsequent practices we isolate the part which is energy and by that time the mind has become sensitive enough to experience the consciousness. Therefore the nature or the quality of the mind becomes continuous. You are able to project it and you are there. There is no movement. One gains the ability where I am sitting here and you are sitting there and within a flash, I am there and you are here, because in that dimension there is no space and no time. One is there, wherever the consciousness is projected. The projection doesn't happen in the form of a movement, you are there.

Theoretically it sounds a bit difficult but energy is always experienced in space and time, it cannot be timeless; it can be primordial but it can't be timeless. Consciousness can be experienced in a timeless state.

Meeting with HIV Positive Support Group

In India, as Swami Pragyamurti has mentioned, there is not a proper support system for people who are living with HIV difficulties. Even public awareness is immature. So during the World Yoga Convention, when Swami Pragyamurti spoke of her experience, her report was published in 180 local and national newspapers in India and she became an overnight celebrity. As a result of that input we are bombarded with questions on how to structure a support system for those who are suffering from HIV problems within Indian society.

Planning a support system for HIV patients

It was the first time that we, as sannyasins and yoga teachers, became aware of the need to have a proper yoga support system. For example, in the army at present there are two hundred HIV patients. In the country overall there are about one million people, which is actually a very insignificant number considering the population of eight hundred and fifty odd million. Nevertheless we feel that if, from the initial stages, we are able to provide such people with proper guidance to manage themselves, then it may even be possible to build up the community so that we are affected less and less by the HIV syndrome in the course of time.

We were thinking of how to manage it and remembered that sometime back, in Australia, research was conducted on

patients suffering from cancer. Of course it is an unrelated subject but we are using that as a basis for our program. The results were collated by the Cancer Foundation of Australia under the direction of Dr Ainslie Meares. He had selected some patients who had totally lost hope. Every kind of therapy had failed, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, diet, operations, but the growth of the cancer could not be contained. He selected six patients and for one year, every day for two hours, he gave them a yoga program consisting of yoga nidra, pranayama, the breathing techniques of yoga, and mantra meditation. He used these three major techniques and found that after one year the patients who had totally given up hope had recovered. Today they are active, well, healthy, and the doctors who were treating them have left the world.

So we are using this research as a basis for creating our own structure to deal with immune difficulties. We made a program which is now being tested in the army with their 200 HIV patients. The program consists of yoga nidra, I'm sure you are all familiar with that practice, pranayama and mantra combined with amaroli, asana practice, kunjaj, neti and shankaprakshalana. When Swami Pragyamurti spoke during the Convention we got ideas from her speech and also incorporated other aspects of yoga which she had seen were beneficial here. We hope that in a year's time we shall be able to see something positive come out of this training.

Yoga Nidra and DIFS, the Disease Induced Fear Syndrome

Yoga nidra is not only a system of relaxation, rather it is a very effective method to manage the DIFS syndrome. DIFS stands for Disease Induced Fear Syndrome. It is the fear which is actually more detrimental than the actual disease of any kind. Fear plays havoc with our mind. It creates a crisis of health imbalance in our life. The moment that we know there is something wrong with our body, no matter how insignificant the ailment may be, the power of the mind then influences the physiological structure.

The yogis have always believed that mind can control matter. The theory of mind over matter is generally seen

when the mind influences our body to react and to respond in a certain way. Usually the negative aspect of the mind, the insecure aspect of the mind, is more powerful than the positive and it is this negative aspect which controls our body. I have seen people who, if they get a boil or a pimple, begin to worry a lot, thinking about what kind of a cyst it is and whether it is a normal one or malignant. In their own heads they begin to create the seeds of disease which would otherwise never exist. The force of negativity directed by the mind affects the body and has the power to eventually make a simple cyst into a malignant tumor. This is what we know as DIFS.

Now, in the practice of yoga nidra it has been experienced that along with a physiological and psychological relaxation, we also begin to experience a state of harmony between body, brain and mind. The moment this harmony is experienced, the barriers which are raised unconsciously, and the blockages within our personality which are existing as an outcome of our inner negativity, are removed. When these blocks are removed the positive aspect of the mind takes control of the body and the allied functions and the healing power of the mind begins to manifest.

So yoga nidra is considered to be a very important practice. It develops the natural inherent healing ability by lowering the defences which come up due to our own natural fears, due to our own negativity. In the practice we also influence the mind with the positive suggestion of a *sankalpa*. Initially these suggestions may look like, feel like and work like auto-suggestions but in the course of time they act at a deeper level of our nature and they tend to develop the keen one pointed faculty in which the mental energies are not dissipated. They can be focused to experience the state of mind over matter.

Pranayama: vitality and the immune system

By following the practice of yoga nidra with the breathing practices, pranayamas, we are able to increase the level of vitality in our bodies. By increasing the level of vitality, the pranic energy which is generated helps to harmonize the

imbalances which are physical in nature and which are mental in nature. Yoga has this beautiful concept of energy working in the physical and subtle dimensions, it is known as prana, the vital force or life force, the force which infuses every aspect of being with vitality, life, consciousness and energy. Yogis believe that this prana shakti is responsible for the maintenance of the body, the mind and also the spirit. In the absence of prana shakti, this sustaining and nurturing force, we would not be here, active and alive.

A lot of investigation has still to be done in understanding what prana shakti is but, through the practise of pranayamas, it has been found that one can increase the level of vitality and then simple deficiencies in the immune system can be rectified. Yoga believes that every form of illness, from the simple cold to the most advanced cancer, is a self generated problem due to a deficiency in the strength and ability of the immune system. The common cold effects our immune system, fever effects our immune system and other diseases such as asthma, hypertension and diabetes also alter the state and performance of our immune system.

Yoga has three main aspects: promotive, preventive and curative. In the promotive aspect we simply build up the resistance of the body in order to deal with influences, situations and environments which can create physiological and psychological disturbances, thus reducing the efficiency of our inner systems. In the preventive aspect of yoga, if we feel that we are going to be attacked by something external, like we feel a cold coming on, or if we are prone to breathing problems or cardiovascular problems, then preventive measures can be taken to avoid the crisis.

The third aspect of yoga is curative. Now in the initial stages yoga can easily manage any kind of disease, and I am 100% sure about it. Generally though, when we come to yoga for any kind of treatment, we come at the last stage, when our problem has increased a thousandfold and every other form of therapy has failed. To then manage a totally disrupted state of personality becomes difficult and is a time consuming process. Still, according to the research which

has been conducted to date, we can see that some people suffering from forms of cancer in advanced stages, terminal stages, were helped by yoga. So much so that the people are still alive today. Other problems such as diabetes, excepting juvenile diabetes, can be helped with the practices of yoga. Asthma in its different varieties, except cardiac asthma, can be helped with the different practices of yoga.

If, initially, we can contain the imbalances which are created by our lifestyle, the environment and other factors, then there is a total possibility of regaining complete health. The definition of health, according to yoga, is harmony in body, brain, emotions, mind and spirit. If we are able to obtain harmony in all these five dimensions then this is total health, otherwise health is always incomplete.

With the practice of pranayamas we can increase the level of vital energy, thus strengthening the force of the different systems which are active within us. A proper digestion goes a long way in providing health. A good immune system goes a long way in providing health. It is possible to obtain this state of being by practising pranayama, especially the vitalizing ones: *kapalbhati*, the frontal breathing; *bhastrika*, bellows breathing; *nadi shodhana*, alternate nostril breathing and *suryabhedha*, the right nostril breathing technique.

Cleansing techniques to remove toxins

The third type of practices which are used in conjunction with pranayama, are the cleansing techniques of yoga. They achieve the elimination of toxins and impurities from the upper digestive tract and the lower digestive tract, from the small and large intestines. Sometimes it is a wonder to me that medical science, till today, has totally ignored the role that the digestive system can play in human health and in human life. People are being operated on constantly in every country of the world. Their bodies are being opened up and the doctors are observing the mucous formation in their bodies and how the mucous is becoming poisoned. The putrid mucous which is not eliminated becomes a poison in our bodies and that leads to incredible blood impurities,

gas formation and the build up of acid pockets in the body. Mucous, which holds the body acids and the poisons which are ingested or formed in the body, becomes itself an oozing poison of the body.

The purificatory practices of yoga are *kunjal*, which removes excess mucous from the upper digestive tract and *shankaparakshalana*, for the removal of toxins and mucous from the stomach, small intestine and large intestine. These are the most important practices for eliminating poisons from the body and then again creating a good mucous lining within our system which aids the process of elimination. The moment we are able to eliminate toxins and poisons from our body, the responses of the body change. I am sure that many of you must have practised neti and kunjal and possibly some of you have practised shankaparakshalana, so you know the feeling which you can have at the time of such practices. It's a feeling of lightness. It's a feeling of being free internally from different blockages of energy and mucous. Once the body is purified of toxins the effect of asanas and pranayamas increases a thousandfold and the body becomes sensitive enough to respond to the changes that an asana or a pranayama is demanding from the body.

Mantra: specific vibratory frequencies

The next practice in this sequence is mantra. Mantra is the most important practice for every person, whether healthy or sick. *Mantra* is vibration, it's the sound, it's the concentration of different vibrations. Yogis have experienced that our body can be regulated by sound vibrations, and not only the body but also the psychological aspect of the human being can be harmonized by the force of vibration. Due to lack of knowledge and understanding, many people have said that mantras are religious prayers. They are absolutely wrong, misinformed. Mantras tend to act on our psychic body, the body which is composed of vibrations. The awakening of the psychic body influences the mental and the physical bodies.

These chakras are the energy centers which are situated in our psychic body and they are each represented in the form

of a flower. Each flower has a different number of petals and in each petal a specific vibration has been represented in the form of a consonant or in the form of a vowel. Mantras are combinations of these sound vibrations. For example, if we mentally say the mantra *Om Namah Shivayah*, the five sounds: na-ma-shi-va-ya relate to different chakras and they awaken the power, the faculty of the specific chakra which begins to vibrate in our psychic bodies. It begins to stimulate the energy of our psychic body and this pranic stimulation and awakening of energy alters the normal patterns of functioning of both our physical and mental bodies.

In the research which was conducted for the management of cancer, mantras played a very important role because just by the vibration, the frequency and the resonance of the chanting, definite changes were brought about in the physical structure. The change which happens with mantra repetition is very subtle. It is an internal process of experiencing harmony, balance, strength and power. Physically we can have the sensation of great relaxation and of being at peace with ourselves. Mentally we can feel that the mind has become stable, the will power is focused, there is clarity of thought, greater comprehension and understanding, and more emotional balance.

These are external manifestations and experience of mantra but the mantra acts on the psychic body, and it is the awakening of the psychic body in every person which gives the ability to control matter through the forces of the mind. So the use of mantra is a very vital aspect of yoga. If we are able to combine the mantra practice into our own life then we will feel the benefit of it. A good combination of such practices as yoga nidra, pranayamas, cleansing techniques and mantra practice, along with other allied systems of asanas and amaroli can be very effective therapy in managing different imbalances which manifest in our bodies.

Swamiji, should we do everything every day?

If you can, make a good program for yourself: twenty minutes of yoga nidra, fifteen minutes of asanas, ten to fifteen minutes

of pranayamas and some time for the cleansing practices and mantra practice. Devote about an hour and a half of your time for the yoga practices, that is the best thing you can do for yourself. If you have difficulties in adjusting your time then do it in two parts, half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening. It is better that you adjust different layers of your personality at the same time so make a good complete program for yourself. Work on the physical level, work on the mental level, on the psychic level and on the vibratory level at the same time.

I'd like to know more about the sankalpa.

Sankalpa is a positive sentence, an affirmation which you make yourself in order to overcome any weakness which you may experience affecting your performance, your life, your body. It can awaken any other strength which you may feel necessary in order to provide this balance within yourself. I have seen, for example, people make a sankalpa to quit cigarettes, and they find that in the course of time their will power develops to a degree where the cigarettes leave the person and the person doesn't have to leave the cigarettes.

It is a positive affirmation that, "I am expressing the positive quality within myself". Don't say that you are going to leave whatever it is you want to overcome, rather give it a complementary thought, "I'm going to develop, I'm going to express my positive nature." In that way you can make a sankalpa according to your choice. You can treat the matter as if it has already happened, not as though it will happen by your affirming it to yourself. Be one step ahead of what you want to achieve.

Is there a special diet that we should follow?

Yoga has given some thought to diet and it says that anything which you eat should be easily digestible. It should leave your stomach within one and a half hours, it shouldn't just sit there or you begin to feel heavy and droopy. The food should be sattwic, which means that it doesn't over strain the body but is digested as per the normal routine of the body.

I think that we have to adjust our diet according to the availability of food. Yoga will say, of course, go the natural way, vegetables, greens, natural proteins and vitamins. At the same time be open to other needs of the body and diets which a therapist prescribes to control certain diseases and ailments. Whatever diet you eat should be light, easily digestible and should give you a feeling of lightness and energy, not of heaviness and lethargy.

I would like to know a little more about the cleansing practices. I have heard that if shankaparakshalana is too difficult we can do a shorter version? The exercises which we have to do after each intake of water are very hard for me to do, I would end up spending a whole day in bed. So, I would like you to talk about this short practice. Is there any harm in doing it every day?

In the short practice of *laghoo shankaparakshalana* you take six glasses of water so you only have to do the asanas two or three times and you are finished. Do it initially, when you are unable to do the long version. In fact the long version is not even that important. Ordinarily it is to be done only twice a year. The short version can be done weekly and for specific therapy you can do it regularly for one month, then have a break for one month, and then do it for one month continuously and have another break of one month.

For you I would recommend that one month is still too long a period in which to do it every day. Do it for one week regularly and then give yourself a break of fifteen days or even a month. Then do it again for one week regularly. The benefits of this continual weekly practise will be as effective as the long version and is a more gentle flushing of the system. You flush a bit today, a bit more the day after and so on.

After doing this short form dietary restrictions are not necessary but after the full form one has to go on a very strict regime which may be difficult to follow in the western environment. If you feel that the short form is impractical because of the routine that you have, then do it once a week and do kunjal and neti every day.

In the search for help for my HIV state, there are several different therapies we have come across but are you saying that these yoga practices that you prescribe are sufficient alone and I don't need to look elsewhere?

If you can combine the yoga practices with other therapies then I'm sure it will be a good combination. For people who are not aware of the alternate therapies and who are practising yoga techniques constantly and continuously, then yoga therapy would be enough. But of course, if you can combine it with other therapies, you don't have to exclude any other therapy. If you begin yoga, that can have a very important healing role. Carry on with whatever you are doing and simply incorporate the necessary practices of yoga in your daily lifestyle.

Swamiji, diseases come which cause pain and suffering, death and so on. I'm not exactly sure what I'm asking but I want to see if you could maybe say a little bit about what the reason for this is and perhaps what we can learn in the face of such conditions as HIV?

There is a poem by Swami Sivananda and I would like to begin with that.

*Nature throws a man into the crucible of pain
In order to turn him into a sublime superman.*

Swami Sivananda used to sing this a lot. The outcome of pain and suffering should be development of spiritual awareness, and spiritual awareness is the natural outcome of inner mental evolution. When the mind is fed up from the pain and sufferings of the external world, coming to terms with yourself and learning to accept yourself is the beginning of spirituality in one's life. Learning to flow with the present environment and not struggling with it is the beginning of spirituality in one's life.

With the development of spiritual awareness, one begins to understand the inherent human qualities of love, compassion and ultimately even universal brotherhood, which is known as having universal vision – the realization of human qualities

in their unconditional form. I mean we all experience love in our life but at present that love is self oriented and it is conditioned. If we can change the quality of that experience into unconditioned love, if we can change the quality of compassion into an unconditioned compassion, if we can change the quality of our spiritual awareness from a self centered, dualistic approach to life, then it becomes a unifying effort in life.

Yoga also speaks of karmas. The karmas can be managed. *Karmas* are deep impressions in our life which make us live, think, behave and perform in a certain way. It is the programming of the computer of life. The programming can never be seen, only the outer function can be seen. In the same way our own programming of life can never be seen, known or realized, mainly because we have not developed the ability to observe that programming. We don't have that access code, but with the generation and awakening of human qualities we get access to the dimension of karmas and one can alter, purify and change the nature of the karmas through this spiritual awareness.

Pain and suffering, happiness and joy, they are states of the manifest mind, the mind which is identifying with the world and with people. When the mind identifies with the spirit, then pain, suffering, joy, happiness, all that takes the form of inner ecstasy. There is ecstasy in pain and there is also ecstasy in happiness. The only thing is that then we have linked our mind with the spirit and normally our mind is linked with matter. So it is the switch over from matter to spirit which can be done by evolving the spiritual awareness and beginning to feel that God is in me and I am in God.

How much conflict is there between western medicine and yoga? I have to take drugs all the time.

No conflict, absolutely no conflict. We have never told anyone to leave their medication. Only when the doctors see the improvement and suggest a reduction of medication, then you can reduce it. Otherwise go on practising your yoga and go on taking your medication. They will both complement each other.

Two questions. Firstly, I would like to know how a mantra is chosen, how is it decided that a mantra is appropriate to one particular person and also how much time should be given to mantra in a daily program?

There are two ways of choosing the mantra. One is the intuitive method. Being able to assess the level of your psychic development and giving a mantra to take you from that point onwards is the intuitive method. For this the intuition has to be very much developed. The other method is by observing the date of birth, knowing the zodiac sign and from that knowing the structure of your mentality and personality. Then the mantra is given to help evolve the normal personality as defined by the zodiac.

The use of mantra? There are two main forms of practice. With the first it is recommended that you devote at least ten minutes of your time in the span of each twenty four hours. In those ten minutes you should not be distracted by things that you need to do, or thoughts that come, or desires, or family, or environment, or society. Those ten minutes are for you alone, without any interference from anyone. In those ten minutes of repeating the mantra you can either whisper it or say it mentally, if you are alone you can even sing it in the form of a kirtan. After you have, for those ten minutes, identified and experienced the vibrations, the force, of the mantra, then you can stop the practice.

The other form of mantra practice is saying it mentally while you are doing normal work. Mentally, you keep on repeating it, while you are working, travelling, eating or even waiting for something. However you should not practise mantra during moments of intense concentration, like when you are driving. Even this continuous mental repetition, active repetition of the mantra, will harmonize your inner being because the moment you begin repeating the mantra you are getting in tune with your inner being.

So both ways can be adopted. Select ten minutes of the twenty four hours which are to be exclusively devoted for your personal growth, and/or say the mantra continuously when you are working, travelling, sitting, waiting, anything.

So could you use mantra if you have a habitual pattern or sequence of thought which has a negative aspect?

Definitely, yes.

My other question is to do with pain. What do you think about the use of pain killers of all kinds, and morphine particularly, in circumstances where someone is close to death? I think it is a classic practice that things are speeded up by increasing the dosages of morphine.

Yes, you see there are two kinds of pain: one is mental, one is physical. Mental pain manifests in the form of anguish. Physical pain can be unbearable and drugs can be used to control the physical pain if that is the need and desire of the person who is suffering. I am not familiar with the medical use of such pain killers but as long as there is a tolerable level of pain which you can deal with properly, I don't think that drugs should be used. When it becomes intolerable, at that moment, in order to maintain clarity of mind, some people do use it but I definitely would not use it otherwise. It depends upon the person. The pain that we speak of in yoga is the tolerable physical and mental anguish which can be controlled with mantra, the inner anguish which can be transformed by the generation of different qualities in life.

I often experience explosive emotions, at times hatred to the point of wanting to kill someone, at times paranoic fear and guilt and at times ecstatic and symbiotic love. Even though I know the background of these emotions in childhood experiences after extensive psychotherapy, they recur again and again. As I do not want to stifle or suppress these emotions, is there any way I could channel them in my daily or professional life?

What you are experiencing here is *vritti* of the mind and Sage Patanjali has dealt with the subject in great detail. He has said that there are five natures of the human mind which are known as *vrittis* or forces which dominate the mind at one given moment. These *vrittis* are of *pramana*, *viparyaya*, *vikalpa*, *nidra* and *smriti*. *Pramana* means right knowledge,

cognition, *viparyaya*, wrong knowledge, *vikalpa*, doubt, *nidra*, sleep or disconnection and *smriti*, memory. Emotions, feelings and other states such as hatred, jealousy and anger which fall in the category of emotions, also fall into the broad category of vrittis. A controlled emotion can fall into pramana vritti, an uncontrolled emotion of hatred, anger, jealousy or frustration, can fall in the category of viparyaya vritti.

Feelings of harmony, compassion, love, affection and dedication can also fall into the category of either pramana or viparyaya depending on their nature, conditioning and their orientation within oneself. If there is a motive behind love or compassion or affection then it will be viparyaya vritti. If they are unconditioned and pure then they would be pramana vritti. In this way Sage Patanjali has dealt with different manifestations of mind in the form of vrittis.

In order to manage the vrittis, one has to manage one's mind. Yoga teaches the process of mind management in the systems of pratyahara and dharana. Those people who can perfect or control their own mental experiences through the practices of pratyahara and dharana can practise psychotherapy on their own. In fact if we observe the process of mind management carefully, the yogic process of mind management will be found to be much more effective and powerful than the modern psychotherapy which exists in the world. This is because in modern psychotherapy we are only dealing with the area of problems, the anguish, frustration, anger and hatred which we experience in relation to one particular situation or environment. In yogic psychotherapy we are not dealing with one particular situation or the expression of such feelings only, rather we are dealing with the totality of mind.

To properly understand the concept of mind management takes time. When we teach the practices of pratyahara we often find that students react very violently to such practices. I can give you one example of a lady who was practising yoga nidra and suddenly, whenever we spoke of visualization in yoga nidra, she would get just one image and she would react very strongly to that image. She would see herself stabbing

someone with a knife and it used to cause a very violent reaction in her. She could not figure out why and we could not figure out why, but nevertheless we continued with the other pratyahara techniques like antar mouna. In the course of time that impression was released from her mind and then she saw herself actually dropping the knife and saying to herself, “I’ve come, I have, I am experiencing peace within myself.” That was the point of change in her life. From a person who was extremely tense, uptight, frustrated, short tempered and reactive, she became a person who was at peace with herself, a gentle and very beautiful nature surfaced.

These things happen many times, naturally, spontaneously and even unconsciously in everyone’s life. You must have experienced in your own practice that after a few months you suddenly feel that something is released from inside. You feel light, you feel floating, you feel joy. You can never figure out what was released from inside but a feeling of contentment and happiness is there. That release which is experienced unconsciously is release of one of the vrittis.

Human beings have a very great problem and that is their intellect. We all try to use our intellect in everything, “What is this? Why? When? How?” etc. When we are dealing with our unconscious nature the rationality of the intellect can never define what is being experienced in the unconscious dimension. Even teachers who teach different practices to us say, “Oh, it is nothing, just samskaras and karmas coming to the surface of the mind”, but actually samskaras and karmas very rarely come to the surface of the mind. They will only come up after the vrittis have been managed.

So vrittis are purified first in the processes of pratyahara and dharana. In my opinion they are the best forms of psychotherapy available in the world today, but one thing we have to accept and understand; sometimes our mind does not behave, act or react according to the concepts of rationality and intellect which we have evolved. If you can understand and apply this understanding in your own practise then these expressions of hatred or jealousy will find no place in your life at all. So you have to learn to apply this

understanding first and then think about managing such reactions.

When we are reborn, do we only go forward in time or is it possible to also go back in time, or is the concept of time irrelevant?

Why are you worried about it? I think it is better if we can make this birth a pleasant and happy one. Anyway I will attempt to answer it.

There is a law of human evolution, it is governed by the intensity of a guna, that is the cosmic attribute governing one's life. There are three gunas: tamasic, rajasic and sattwic. *Tamasic* actually means being conditioned to a state of being and not wanting to change it. In normal language the negative sense of this could be called stagnation. The positive sense of tamasic is a state of life in which we are at ease with ourselves. *Rajasic*, in the negative sense, means an ego centered, self oriented perception, in the positive sense it means creativity where the different faculties of our nature are harmonized and an effort is made to evolve and progress. *Sattwic*, in the normal sense is purity manifesting in thought, deed and word, and the experience of an inner effulgence or luminosity in the spiritual dimension.

Now in our normal life, when we go through the different stages of life, if we are not aware of what is being experienced by us, and if we are not able to channel our efforts, then tamas and rajas in their negative form are predominant. Then we are at the mercy of mental whims and desires, ego and ambition, and we move and act according to their direction. When we are aware of their influence on human nature and when we are aware of our own interactions with life with greater awareness, with greater knowledge and wisdom, then the sattwa state is experienced.

According to the tradition, those who experience the sattwa state move forward and at the time of rebirth they are at a higher level of consciousness. Those who are bound by self oriented ego awareness and are tamasic or intensely rajasic by nature, tend to remain in the same state. Regression takes

place when the mind dives deeper into its own negativity so that within the mind there is no place for knowledge nor the application of that knowledge in order to evolve.

So here we are seeing three stages: regression which happens in intense tamasic and rajasic states, continuation in the same state if we are normally tamasic and rajasic, and progression when we are sattwic. So, at the time of death it is possible to choose how we are going to be reborn. There are many stories of the experiences of saints who have come to this stage of awareness and realization. They tell us that at the time of death, if one can maintain a sattwic state of mind then the bondages of pain do not bind the human consciousness to the same level in which we find ourselves today, there can be evolution and there can be progression.

Swamiji, I often have very strong and vivid dreams in which you or Paramahamsaji appear. At the time of my initiation I had a strong dream that Swamiji died with his head in my hands. Could you talk about it?

Generally if we look at the symbology of dreams, seeing somebody die in a dream always means long life to that person. The death, in a dream, of a person whom we have made our guru means that the guru is going to outlive you, maybe not physically but as an inspiration which will keep on guiding you and propelling you through the life processes. The appearance of somebody whom we respect or in whom we have trust and faith, with whom we can feel a psychic connection, is actually a blessing in disguise.

At the time of sleep our mind unconsciously tunes itself with the energy, the vibration, of such persons who are considered to be evolved and loved, and in whom we have placed our faith and trust. It is that impression of the unconscious which manifests. Seeing the image of the person in a dream is a link between the energies of the mind. So I would take such dreams to be an indication of our link with the guru or people in whom that guru's energies are active and functioning. Such dreams should reaffirm your own faith in the energy and the quality that the guru represents.

You talked yesterday about destiny and karma and I wondered about the difference between the two? How much of our life is destiny? Can we shape our own destiny? Should we even be thinking about that?

I suggest that you think about whether you can improve your present. If you feel that we have no control over the present, and if we fall due to the influences of the present and react in a tamasic or rajasic way, then definitely we will not be able to control or change our destiny.

Spiritual traditions have always said that you can alter and change your destiny provided you have a sattwic nature in which you can experience union with God. In order to change destiny one has to go beyond the state of mind. If we are swayed by the influences of mind then it is not possible to change destiny, that is theory number one of yoga. Destiny means an influence, which may be of a cosmic nature, controlling, governing and directing our life processes. Physically the experience of destiny can be seen, or the existence of destiny can be seen, in birth, death and in the constant process of maturing the body.

Can you stop your body from growing up? No. Why? Because we are not aware of how to do it. If there is a process, there is also a regulating factor, a system. The body of a child matures into an adult and continues to age. There is constant cellular change which is an ongoing process. We cannot control these changes through logic but those who have attained the sattwic state of mind, who have come to the state of no mind, who are beyond mind, are able to control this system in the form of *kaya kalpa*. *Kaya kalpa* is rejuvenation of the physical body. One can rejuvenate the body and again become a child in one lifetime. There are stories of Babaji, they call him the ever youthful saint. He is an example of a person who has perfected the system of *kaya kalpa*.

So, one becomes a siddha before gaining the ability to control destiny. Destiny is cosmic in nature and humans have no power over it. Karmas are not cosmic in nature, they are impressions in the field of consciousness which are carried

by the nature of the mind, the opposite natures of the mind. I'll give you an example. The karmas are fixed experiences in life but the memories of those karmas and the reactions to those karmas carry on for a long time in our life. A flower is growing in the garden. It does not move with you as you walk around the garden but the smell of the flower, depending on which way the wind is blowing, will be smelt even when you are far away from it. Karmas are static in nature but their power can be experienced according to the flow of the human mind. Therefore it is possible for a person to control the karmas and channel the karmas by stilling the mind and not having to experience the effect of the karmas.

The karmas are impressions of the mind which are carried from one life to another. There is a very beautiful example of a lady who had come to Munger and was suffering from chronic headaches. As far back as she could remember, from her childhood, she had been suffering from continuous headaches. She had visited every specialist in the country, gone to every person who claimed to cure headaches, had tried hundreds of medications, nothing had helped. When she came to the ashram, Paramahamsaji looked at her and asked her, "Do you trust me?" That was the first thing. No, "Hello, how are you?", nothing of that sort. She was quite taken aback by these words and then she said, "Yes, I trust you." His second sentence was, "Stop taking all medications from today. No matter what happens, don't take any medication." She said, "Alright, I won't."

In the ashram, all of us went through deep mental anguish. When she stopped taking her medication and the pain came up, she used to yell and scream as if her head was going to split into two. It was incredible. Even when I remember her yells and screams today I get shivers in my body. One day she fainted because of the pain. When she came to, she didn't have any headache. We asked her what happened. She said, "When I fainted I started to see some images in my mind, in that unconscious state. In those images I recognized myself as a person who was working in a coal mine at a place in the UK. There was this rumbling sound and the person who

was working in the coal mine looked up and saw the ceiling coming in – hit! And death. So the last impression and memory was of pain.”

We inferred from her story that she was the same person who had died and when she was born again the memory of the pain returned. It was something which she could not recognize or release, and that pain became her karma. At first sight Paramahamsaji had been able to see that her headache was not a physical thing, it could not be touched by medications. It was a karmic thing and he had to create an environment where pain would become so intense that the karma would manifest and explode. This is why he said no medication. The beauty of it was that this person had the guts to trust him and say no to her medication, and that was the release of karma.

Self Evolution

Yoga is a system of experience, non-intellectual and non-rational experience. I don't think it can be described. In the yogic system we try to understand the nature of the human body, mind and emotions and to harmonize their interaction with each other. This is the main aim of yoga. The ability to understand the nature and limitations of the human body and mind varies from individual to individual according to our own mental maturity, inner growth and our own evolution of consciousness.

Definitely there are forces which control this process of evolution. A human being does not control his or her own process of evolution and those who think that they are in control are wrong in their thinking. The evolutionary process is an on-going, spontaneous, natural process. The only thing we can do is become aware of it and live in harmony with the process rather than struggling with it. This moment of realization of the on-going evolution within, and of the forces which guide the movement of consciousness and energy from the dimension of matter to the dimension of spirit; this awareness of a person's ability being used to attain harmony, is the direction of yoga. It is in this context that we have to understand what yoga is.

I am not here to teach you anything new but to make you apply what you already know. You should be able to apply your knowledge, your strength and understanding properly. Knowing is not important, it is the application of

what we know already which is important. So, keeping this attitude in mind we shall look at the various principles of yoga.

Harmonizing our own philosophy, desires and actions

Right now, for many of us, yoga is not an experiential process. Our own understanding of yoga happens in two different levels, one is intellectual and rational and the other is purely physical. This is the normal trait of the human personality. If we look at human nature we find that there is always a gap, a difference between the basic philosophy, the desires which motivate us in life and the actions which we perform in daily life. Sometimes our philosophy contradicts our own actions. Sometimes our own actions contradict our own desires. In this way they are never combined to become a force which can sublimate the ordinary, normal nature of human mind.

So in this yogic process, more important than meditation, more important than the practise of asanas, is the realization that we have to bring these three aspects of our life together: the aspect of action, the aspect of motivation or desire and the aspect of our own inner knowledge or philosophy. The moment we are able to combine these three, our life will definitely become very rich and fulfilled, and the inner experience of harmony and bliss is going to dominate our behavior. If this much can be attained, then you can rest assured that you are on the right path.

Sage Patanjali's definition of yoga

In order to attain even this much we need to become aware of what is actually going on within the body and within the mental and emotional structure. I have asked many practitioners of yoga the question I am going to ask you now: According to Sage Patanjali, what is the aim of yoga which has been defined in the first three sutras? Give the answer in your own mind.

Normally our mind automatically goes towards the second and third sutras. I want to divert your attention to the first.

The sutras are:

Atha yoga anushasanam

Now begin the instruction on yoga.

Yogah chitta vritti nirodhah

Yoga is a system of stopping the mental modifications.

Tada drastuh swarupe avasthanam

After stopping the mental modifications one begins to identify with the real nature of the self.

The second and third sutras are only states of attainment after you have begun the practice of yoga. After you have started the practice of yoga you can control the mental modifications. After you have started the practices of yoga and have been sincere in your own commitment to yourself, to your mind, your nature and spirit, then you will be able to experience your inner nature. The first sutra is the most important one because it has used the specific word, 'anushasanam'. *Anushasanam* is the actual process of yoga. *Shasana* means to govern, to rule, and *anu* is a prefix denoting the subtle dimensions and layers of the human personality. According to the first sutra, the ability to govern the subtle manifestations of human nature and personality manifesting in the body, in the mental dimension and also in the spiritual dimension, is yoga.

Awareness, knowledge and the effort towards harmony

Now the subtle experiences of the body, mind and spirit and the deep inner consciousness when they are realized, when we come to know them; that first experience is not of knowledge but of awareness and harmony. Knowledge is a symptom of having extended the awareness to an area from where we gain the knowledge. In the absence of awareness, knowledge would not come. Awareness is the requirement and, after awareness has been developed, then that awareness will automatically make an effort to create an environment of harmony.

When we become aware of something wrong in our life, an imbalance, a crisis, then our first effort is to sort out that problem. Only then do we feel happy, satisfied, content and fulfilled. As long as the problem is not sorted out, we feel inner anguish, we are disturbed, not at ease. Awareness always goes with the effort to harmonize and balance out the disruptive aspects of our nature and personality, and these two are combined with knowledge. So the concept of being aware and of knowing what is happening in the subtle dimensions of body, mind and spirit, and reaching the point of balance within our own personality, is the aim of yoga.

Yogic discipline relates to the predominant guna and chakra

Keeping this aim in mind, yogis evolved many practices of asanas, pranayamas, mudras, bandhas, Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Nada Yoga, Mantra Yoga and many other yogas. One may wonder why so many yogas came, when the aim is always attainment of inner, individual harmony with the universal cosmic consciousness. The aim is always one but over a period of time the practitioners who came to an understanding of the individual's relationship with the cosmic consciousness realized that we all function at different levels of existence, evolution and consciousness. The manifestation of energy is different in each one of us.

We are influenced by the gunas: tamas, rajas and sattwa. We are guided by the forces of energy which are active in a particular chakra at a given moment. Some people function at the level of anahata chakra, some at swadhisthana, mooladhara, or ajna. We don't all function in the same way and, as the energy manifests differently in these different levels, the understanding of mind is different. The same concept can be understood in twenty different ways by twenty different people. So the expression of consciousness and energy is different in each one of us, and we all function from this level where rationality and instinct are both being affected by the dominant chakra.

In order to use the forces of energy and consciousness in the active chakra, in order to evolve from that point onwards,

a different yoga is required for different people. Those people who function more from the mooladhara and swadhisthana levels require Hatha Yoga; identification with the body, awareness and harmonization of the body and using the energies of the body, in the form of prana shakti, to evolve internally. This is a fact, please remember it.

People who function from mooladhara and swadhisthana need Hatha Yoga. People who function from manipura and anahata need the practices of Bhakti Yoga. People who function from the level of vishuddhi and ajna need the practices of Raja Yoga. In each yoga we find a different understanding of consciousness and energy which governs our interaction with the manifest world of senses and objects, idea, name and form. For this reason yogis evolved different practices according to their own perfection in life, because they were also people who started at different levels. Not all the exponents of yoga have started from the ajna level or from the mooladhara level. They were ordinary people like you and me who, through their sincerity and commitment, came to a state of realization. They evolved and were in tune with the practices that they were performing.

If we look at our own practise of yoga, we find that there are many times in our life when we shift from the practise of one yoga to the practise of another. There are times when we feel comfortable with the practices of Hatha Yoga, there are times when we feel comfortable with Raja Yoga or with Jnana Yoga. These shifts in our practice represent the function and the manifestation of consciousness and energy, which are the two main forces which govern our life.

The manifest and unmanifest forms of consciousness and energy

What modern psychology knows as mind: the conscious, the subconscious, the unconscious, and what yogic psychology knows as mind: manas, buddhi, chitta, ahamkara, are the manifest aspects of consciousness. Experiences of the conscious mind, the subconscious mind and the unconscious mind; the experiences of manas, buddhi, chitta and

ahamkara are identifiable. They relate with the life which we live right now and therefore all such expressions of mind are the manifest aspects of the consciousness which is also transcendental by nature, subtle by nature.

The force which guides our performance, activity, behavior and motivation is the force of energy, shakti. This shakti is the manifest aspect of the transcendental shakti. Transcendental shakti exists, transcendental consciousness exists. In the manifest dimension they are in concentrated form. Suppose we punch somebody or a punching bag. The force is concentrated in that punch, it is being directed and focused outwards. At the time of giving the punch the energies were focused at one point. The same principle applies with the cosmic energy and consciousness. The manifestation of the cosmic energy and consciousness in the outer dimension is nothing but a directed, focused form of the unmanifest consciousness and energy, just like a punch, or just like the 'Big Bang'.

So we are just observing a process which manifests in our life naturally and spontaneously. Yoga aims to give an understanding of the possibility of realizing both the manifest and unmanifest nature of consciousness and energy. This realization of the transcendental state of being is known as samadhi, nirvana, moksha, the awakening of kundalini, self realization, or any other name you care to give it. The name makes no difference, the experience is always the same because it is an experience of the transcendental mind.

Tuning ourselves to transcendental reality

One has to go through a process of learning how to make oneself transcendental. Somebody once asked our guru, Paramahansa Satyananda Saraswati, "Is it possible to attain realization in this life or not?" He gave a very short and simple answer, "No. Impossible!" If we had asked this question, can you imagine what the state of our feelings would have been? They said, "That means everything we have done so far and believed so far has been absolutely false and wrong!" Paramahamsaji continued to explain, "What we call

the transcendental reality or the cosmic reality or the state of self realization, is an experience that cannot be had by an untranscendental mind, an untranscendental brain, an untranscendental body. In order to have that experience, our effort has to be to convert the quality of the faculties which are expressed within our body and mind from the mundane to the transcendental. The moment we are able to convert the nature of our faculties of life from the mundane to the transcendental, divine experience is bound to happen. You are not to concern yourself about the attainment of that divine, cosmic experience, you have to make the effort to change the quality of yourself.”

It is here that the other practices of different special traditions come into our life, whether they be yoga or any other tradition or system. With their practise we gradually begin to change the guna, the nature of body, mind and the manifest consciousness. If you can remember this much then I'm sure the yogic process will be very clear to you. Many people say to me, “Swamiji, I have been practising meditation, yoga and sadhana for so long and I feel I have not got anywhere. What could be the reason for it?” Whatever the real reason may be, as practitioners of yoga, we should know that we have to take the first step, we can't expect just to jump there.

So much effort has to be put into making things available instantly. Even with instant tea and instant coffee, so much effort has gone into it previously so that all you have to do is add water and it's finished. You have to be willing to make that much of an effort, without that nothing can be attained. Sage Patanjali has a beautiful sutra about this in his *Yoga Sutras*. He says that sadhana is continuous practise which is done for a long time without break, with faith and belief.

He has added the aspects of faith and trust to normal practice, emphasizing that nothing can be mechanical. For one's inner growth one needs to combine the performance of the practice with the aspect of your own mind, in the form of trust, conviction and inner faith in yourself. It is only the combination of physical and mental forces which can take

one beyond the normal state of perception and experience of life and sadhana. Therefore your own life has to be very straight, simple and sincere. Your attitude towards sadhana has to be sincere in order to have this experience of evolution in the process of sadhana. That means not setting the sights too high, beyond your reach.

In this context we can understand the necessity of disciplining our inner nature. Asanas discipline our inner nature. Although they may be practices which are physical, they influence the psychic personality. Asanas take the body through different stages of expansion, of contraction, of releasing, of containing, energies and strengths and forces which are physical. This is the deeper level of asana. They release, they expand, they focus, they relax the manifestations and the forces which are in our physical body.

Pranayamas also bring about a new experience of energy. We have the prana in our body all the time, but when we practise pranayama we are sensitizing our awareness to experience the flow of prana. When we begin to observe the flow of prana in our system, in our body, in our lungs and brain, and we see how it is influencing and altering the states of the body, the nervous system, the brain, then that sharp and keen awareness stimulates the subtle prana.

There are states of the body which you can control by a physical action and there are states of mind which can be controlled by a mental action. Mental action involves concentration. Mental action is directing the will, focusing the dissipated states of mind. So, combining the physical and the mental together, one can attain liberation of energy from the body and from the mind. Although practices may be physical in nature, they also affect and influence the deeper structure of our psychic body.

Understanding where our consciousness is at present

The yogic concept of human personality involves the understanding of the five koshas. These are the five dimensions in which we live and function continuously, sometimes with awareness, sometimes without awareness.

The five koshas are:

1. *Annamaya kosha*, the body of matter
2. *Pranamaya kosha*, the body of energy
3. *Manomaya kosha*, the body of mind, manifest mind
4. *Vijnanamaya kosha*, the body of intuitive, universal knowledge
5. *Anandamaya kosha*, the body of bliss.

Most of the time our awareness is centered in the annamaya dimension, the material dimension. There are times when we can be aware of the pranamaya or the manomaya, and that is usually at a time of crisis, not at the time of pleasure and comfort. Do you become aware of your mind when you are experiencing comfort and happiness? No. Realization may be there, I'm not denying that, but intense awareness and the effort to know the human mind is not there at that point of experience. It comes when there is pain, when there is suffering, when there is crisis, imbalance, shock and hurt, and when that force is so powerful that we are unable to manage ourselves.

As a normal condition of life, human beings are tamasic creatures. We are not sattvic creatures, we are not rajasic creatures, we are tamasic beings. We aspire for the positive qualities in life but we identify with the negative. We want positive qualities in life but we are influenced by the negative. We wish to develop positive qualities but our thrust towards developing them is suppressed by the detrimental, negative qualities in life. This is the tamasic state and therefore our aspirations tend to become philosophical while our desires and actions go the other way.

Practising with a realistic aim for self evolution

So how do we change this tamasic nature? The ability to change the tamasic state into rajasic and the rajasic into sattvic is the main thrust of yoga, by acquiring this internal discipline, anushasan. I want you to remember one thing. Realization is a symptom of a person who is in harmony. Transcendence is the outcome of a person who has knowledge of his being, who knows what is happening. These are not things that you can

attain. They are states which represent a level of perfection. You have to go through a process of becoming. You can't 'be' because 'being' is a very difficult thing. We are not to aspire for realization. We are to aspire for conversion of qualities by attaining this *anushasan*, the ability to direct the subtle forces of our being, and it is with this awareness that we have to practise yoga.

If we practise meditation it should be with the idea, with the concept, "Okay, I want to observe and know my mental structures, my emotional structures." After all, that is the whole system of pratyahara and dharana. Self knowledge, self observation, and after that conversion of the state which is being experienced at present, conversion of our quality from tamasic to rajasic to sattwic. It is this understanding which we need to apply in our life and it is this understanding that you need to tell to other people: "Look, identify with something that is happening right now and change the nature of it, change the quality of it, only then will yoga become a living experience." With this attitude, with this concept we shall try to experience the practices of yoga and the theories of yoga.

Swamiji, would you please comment on the relationship, if any, between unity and perfection?

Nobody has experienced perfection and likewise nobody has experienced unity. How can someone describe something which is neither experienced nor experienceable? Perfection and unity are the same thing if we think about them intellectually, with the slight difference that perfection represents the process of becoming and unity represents the aspect of realization or identification with the cosmic forces and energy.

One should not attempt to define either perfection or unity. The moment we begin to define them we lose the total meaning. It's like trying to define what normal is. What is normal? Like you? Like me? And anyone who is not like you or me, are they then subnormal or supernormal or abnormal? No. There are stages of life, and the ability to experience that

stage of life without any inner conflict represents the ongoing process of perfection.

If there is struggle, if there is doubt, if there is uncertainty, then the lack of understanding and harmony definitely does not represent perfection. Perfection has the same meaning in yoga as the word master. When somebody is a master, when they are perfect, when they are a *siddha*, then all the different dimensions of human personality merge into one and the state of being in complete harmony with oneself is experienced, and that is also the concept of unity. If at all it can be described in one word, it is the final experience of harmony.

If transcendence is required, what is the role of God?

Definitely transcendence is required and that transcendence represents the nature of God. The word God itself combines three natural faculties: 'G' for generation, 'O' for organization and 'D' for destruction. God is actually an acronym, it is not a concept, it is not a person, it is neither male nor female, it is a state of being where the three natural qualities of life manifest in the life of an individual.

Creativity, when manifesting with spiritual awareness, represents the first nature of God; the first letter. The ability to organize, to maintain that creativity, to sustain and nurture the creativity, represents the second letter of God. Destruction, which is necessary for transformation, for a new creation, is the third letter of the word God. These three forces of generation, organization and destruction are experienced when one reaches a state of 'no mind'. Then they are experienced in their pure form, not in the conditioned form. The ability of coming to this state of 'no mind' is the state of transcendence.

Transcendence simply means where one goes beyond the habitual, normal patterns of the manifest mind. This manifest mind has been defined in yoga in the form of *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*. *Manas* means the thinking aspect, *buddhi* the rational aspect, *chitta* the inner awareness and *ahamkara* the 'I' identity of the self. These four aspects

of mind represent the manifest dimension and the manifest experience of universal consciousness.

As you progress along the path of experiencing the universal consciousness within yourself, which is possible, it is not fantasy nor speculation, then progression through the various states of mind, of *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*, and of *jagrit* to *swapna* to *nidra* to *turiya*, is known as transcendence. So transcendence is a process.

Is the yogic path a selfish activity?

Originally I used to think it was, and I was never very comfortable with it. I could never figure out why people would close their eyes and try to forget the pains, the pleasures, the sensations and the environment of the outside world, and attempt to go in to feel inner peace and stability. I used to think this was a very selfish process. However when I became aware of the yogic process, I realized that yoga is not selfish.

Theoretically it may seem so because we are dealing with the awakening of the faculties of an individual, but once we come to the end of the yogic process, which is *samadhi*, the individuality dissolves and a universal consciousness dawns. When this happens, you retain the same body, you retain the same mind, you retain the same mentality but have a different vision which is universal. The behavior, the attitude, the performance, the interactions, the lifestyle, everything undergoes a change, in some cases a drastic change, after *samadhi*. This is because *samadhi* at one level represents understanding of the natural lifestyle of a person, the ability to accept our own nature and not hide from our nature.

Most of the time we hide from ourselves. This is a fact. Most of the time we do not accept ourselves as we are. We create an image of ourselves which is totally different to our actual nature. If you are sincere with yourself you will agree with me. If you are not sincere, well, then you will have questions. But I am sure that those of you who have given some deep thought to your life, to your personality, to the expressions and manifestations of desires, strengths and

weaknesses in life, will agree that we generally do not wish to recognize our weaknesses. We hide behind some form of identity which builds up our own ego or self image.

Now the yogic process, for sincere seekers who want to experience the deep qualities of mind, is meant to make one re-educate oneself. Yoga is a process of re-education but we have never looked at yoga like that, we have looked at it as a group of exercises and that has been our folly. In the process of re-education let us begin with the *Yoga Sutras*, because we are familiar with them. I would not wish to bring in other theories of yoga here. In the *Yoga Sutras* we find the eight stages of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Since we are familiar with this concept I would like to touch upon it briefly in order to explain what I am trying to say.

When Sage Patanjali was codifying the system of yoga, he placed the aspects of yama and niyama as the first two requirements, believing that people would attempt to imbibe these techniques in their life, before attempting to practise asanas and pranayamas. As our habit manifests all the time, we want to jump classes and attain our degree as soon as possible. We have jumped the levels of the yamas and niyamas and gone straight into the practice of asanas and pranayamas. Incorrect. The basic foundation of yama and niyama is not there in our life structure. Because of this absence of yamas and niyamas, we identify more with the body and the normal frustrations and anxieties of life, and less with our inherent abilities which can bring us to a state of realization. It is at this point that the yamas and niyamas become the strengths to overcome inner weaknesses.

If one follows the path of yama and niyama, then right from the start the practices of yoga will have a universal dimension to them and not a selfish dimension. If we consider them to be unimportant, and have moved on with the practices of asana and pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, our whole awareness is centered on the experiences which are generating within the body and mind, and how we are able to relate to those experiences.

Many people come to me and say, “Swamiji, I want to learn a new form of meditation.” I say, “Alright, you join a class and learn.” Afterwards they say, “Swamiji, that meditation did not feel right, it’s not for me.” I’m sure that this thought has come into the minds of many people in the course of their practice. They feel uncomfortable with a certain system of meditation and then eventually reject it to adopt another in which they feel happy and comfortable. So what are you doing? You are ignoring one nature of mind and stimulating another, which is restricting your own vision, your ability to experience the other side of your nature.

If you think that you are positive all the time and there is absolutely no negativity, then there is something wrong with your head. You will always feel that yoga is a selfish method if you are only trying to please yourself, you will never go beyond the normal patterns of mind. If I meditate, and in my meditation I see angels and light, then I feel happy and say, “I have seen a vision.” If, in my meditation, I then see the devil and hell, and I say, “Oh no, something is wrong,” then there is no acceptance of my own weaknesses. Even in the lives of yogis who have been practising and studying yoga, when I find situations like these, I have a hard time explaining to them, teaching them, how they should learn to accept themselves as they are.

We do not have viveka, we do not have the strength of discrimination, we do not have the strength of wisdom, knowledge, understanding. All our knowledge is very peripheral and because of this peripheral knowledge we are unable to experience the real nature. So it is better that we begin, along with the practices which we are doing, to experience the states and disciplines of the yamas and niyamas too, in order to experience the universal vision of yoga.

Samadhi, which is the final stage of yoga according to Sage Patanjali, is not isolation, it is not the experience of the individual being united with the cosmic principle, rather it is an acceptance of human responsibilities and obligations in relation to the world, with a different attitude. In samadhi

what happens? People say that God manifests from within. If a person like God, an all-powerful person, comes to your house, how will you receive God? You will give him a nice seat to sit on. And God is a bit finicky in this sense, he likes to have a nice seat, he will not sit if the seat is not proper. You need to give him a chair, he is not a person to sit on the floor. The chair has four legs which represent affection, love, compassion and devotion, and a cushion which represents the soft pranas, not the hard pranas. Pranas can be both hard and soft. For God it is necessary to have soft prana, meaning prana which can melt for anyone, not only for the near and dear ones.

Suppose two people are involved in an accident, one is your offspring and the other is a friend. Who is closer to your heart? Your offspring. There is an automatic, emotional connection with the offspring and not such a deep connection with the friend at an unconscious level. This is a manifestation of affection which is conditioned, and compassion which is conditioned. Our offspring gets sick and we leave no stone unturned to make sure that he or she gets well fast enough. Why can't we have this deep feeling for everyone? It means there is something wrong in our own personality which does not allow the unconditioned feelings of love, compassion, affection and devotion to manifest.

In samadhi, if one actually experiences the real state of samadhi, then these four feelings are also bound to express themselves, otherwise it is not real samadhi, it is not even meditation. In samadhi there is another programming structure. It is not a state of realization, at the level of samadhi also you have to work hard. When you come to the point of samadhi then yoga does not simply remain a selfish activity, it becomes a tool by which one can link with other life forms in God's creation. That is the meaning of unity, union. In union there can not be any division. Imagine that you have an earthen pot, full of water, and you submerge it in a lake. There is water inside and there is water outside. How does one merge the water that is inside the pot with the water that is outside? Break the earthen pot, then there is no distinction

between the water that was inside and the water that was all around it. That is the state of union. That is the state of fusion, merger. And this earthen pot is the ego. Ego gives the knowledge of right and wrong, just and unjust, me and you. Ego is the cause of duality in life and when ego does not exist there is only unity, and in unity there is no selfish quality manifesting.

Swamiji, could you tell us something of yoga and children? How much do we need to teach them? How much more, perhaps, will they teach us? How are we to introduce yoga to children as a way of life yet remain within society?

Children should be given the right samskaras which can help them progress and evolve in life without any conditioned teaching. What you should learn from your child is how to be simple and free. If you can learn that much from a child then you will not have all the heady problems that you find now. That is the best teaching that a child can provide you with. The teaching that you can provide children with is the ability to express their creativity in an unconditioned way.

We are all being conditioned right from the time of our birth, and this conditioning takes place because of the influence of the family and their mental trips, society and its demands, the culture and its input in the consciousness. All these things that condition the mind, the consciousness and the life of a child happen at an unconscious level. It is not a conscious activity. It happens at an unconscious level without anyone being aware of it happening. It will continue to happen, no matter how much you try to stop it from happening, because the radio waves are everywhere. You only have to turn on your radio to pick up a channel. In the same way the thought patterns which exist in a society tune the frequencies of a child's mind and nature and the child imbibes everything unconsciously.

For that impression to become a conscious impression one has to go through the process of maturity. According to the yogic tradition, children have to be given the correct support and encouragement in order to express their creativity. At the

same time they should be given another environment which is different from the environment of the family, society and culture. In the new environment, which we call a yogic or spiritual environment, they are taught about samskaras.

Samskaras are generally considered to be impressions, but if you dissect the Sanskrit word, samskara you will find that it comes from the root *kri*, the ability to perform. This ability to perform, when combined with the prefix *sam*, becomes *samskara*, the ability to perform in life which is gained after knowing the principles of harmony between body, mind and spirit.

Samskaras can be provided by introducing the children, after the age of eight, to simple practices of yoga: mantra awareness, pranayama and asana practice. Begin with these three things. The most important one is the mantra awareness. It is the power of mantra, the power of vibration which will make them understand their own inner nature and come to terms with their own life, and this will be the first step in living a true life.

Meditation

In normal language meditation can be understood as a state of mind where the mental energies are focused on one point. This concept of meditation is actually the concept of dharana – to hold the mind at a fixed point – so what is dhyana in this context?

Pratyahara: the first stage of meditation

Let us begin with pratyahara. *Ahara* means to consume. *Pratyahara* means feeding the inner senses, prati plus ahara. Although some people have said that pratyahara is withdrawal of the senses, and they may be right according to their own experience, understanding and depth of concentration, still why has this name ‘pratyahara’ been given to the initial practices of meditation or dhyana? What is the meaning of ‘feeding the inner senses’?

Normally the nature of our senses is to be extroverted. They are continuously connecting with objects from which they derive pleasure, contentment and fulfillment. It is the nature of the senses to always look for satisfaction. If they do not find it in one place they will automatically move on to the next place. Senses are the mediums, the tools by which we sustain the manifest mind.

We feed the manifest mind. Just as food is required to nourish the physical body, and from the food we derive strength and then eliminate the unnecessary toxins, in the same way the senses provide food for the mind in the form

of satisfaction, happiness and contentment. They have been providing this for a long time. When we begin pratyahara, feeding the inner senses, we begin through a process of inner observation, trying to find out, to know, to realize what is happening in the dimension of mind and trying to remove the toxins from the mind.

What we eat physically is at some point eliminated physically. What we receive mentally also has to be removed, eliminated at some point, and this is the teaching of pratyahara so that internally you are not constipated and neither do you suffer from diarrhoea. It is an art. We have continuously fed ourselves mentally and emotionally, but we have never removed the toxins after having the desired fulfillment and enjoyment from the nourishment of the senses. So the meaning of pratyahara is: first of all discover areas of mind which interact with the senses and see how the senses actually nourish the inner mind, after this eliminate the toxins, the poisons which accumulate in the mind. The techniques of pratyahara are directed towards the elimination of toxins accumulated inside.

You are familiar with the practice of antar mouna in which we have to observe one thought and go to the source of it, leave that and pick up another thought, go to the source of it, leave it and continue in this way until ultimately we gain complete control over the thought processes. Just as antar mouna is a practice which gives the ability to remove toxic thoughts, in the same way there are other techniques of pratyahara which have not yet been taught by any tradition. These new techniques are known as *antar darshan dhyana* and *hamsa dhyana*.

These different aspects of pratyahara act at different levels of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind. The purpose is to remove the accumulated negativity and toxins from inside which are the result of uncontrolled desires, emotions and other subtle manifestations of the human mind apart from thoughts.

Observing the influences we are subject to

Another concept of pratyahara is learning to extend the senses outside before you actually withdraw them in, so you know their limits. Once you know how far the senses can be extended outside, then you begin to pull them in and senses have a very peculiar nature. Senses are known as indriyas in Sanskrit and without the proper understanding of the Sanskrit word you won't be able to understand the dimension of dhyana. *Indriyas* means the forces which rule the mind. They are classified in two groups, the karmendriyas and the gyanendriyas. Gyanendriyas, karmendriyas and their interaction rule the mind, the behavior pattern and our interactions.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, 15th chapter, there is a very beautiful description of how an individual is influenced by the nature of the senses. Sri Krishna says that the spirit, at the time of adopting another body is accompanied by six friends. These companions are the five senses which relate with the different tattwas or elements. The five senses are qualities of the five tattwas: touch, hearing, sight, taste and smell are attributes of the five elements. The sixth companion is the mahat tattwa, the subtle tattwa which of course, according to the Sankhya tradition is then further classified into four categories: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara.

Manifestation

Beginning of Manifestation	Pranic/psychic Center	Sensory Connector	External Agent
Tattwa	Chakra	Gyanendriya	Karmendriya
Mahat	Ajna	Mind	Intellect
Akasha	Vishuddhi	Ears	Vocal chords
Vayu	Anahata	Skin	Hands
Agni	Manipura	Eyes	Feet
Jal	Swadhisthana	Tongue	Genitals
Prithvi	Mooladhara	Nose	Anus

So mahat is a tattwa, the five elements are tattwas and the indriyas are extensions of the tattwas. Prithvi tattwa is the element of matter. Jal tattwa is the water element. Agni tattwa is the fire element. Vayu tattwa is the air element. Akasha tattwa is the ethereal element. Mahat tattwa is the mind element. These are the six tattwas, and the six indriyas which are their extensions, accompany the spirit to its new abode in a new body.

Don't think, "How does that happen?" Take the example of yourself shifting house. You may leave your house but you carry bags of photographs, clothes, cosmetics, and they go to the new house. You don't leave the photographs on the mantelpiece, no, they go with you. Just as we carry things from one house to the next, which we feel belong to us, in the same way the spirit carries with it the indriyas which it considers belong to itself.

So, the indriyas are powers, forces which interact with each other and rule the manifest nature of the self and therefore it is never possible to go beyond the senses. Even in the states of highest realization one has to work with the senses and the sensory faculties but their accumulation can be avoided. Things that accumulate deep within our personality can be eliminated. The process of realizing how far the effect or the influence of the indriyas is reaching in our nature happens through the practise of pratyahara. So in pratyahara initially there is extension of awareness, to eliminate the toxins accumulated within and after that we pull the senses back and establish them in the nature of spirit. That is pratyahara. When we are able to withdraw them, pull back the string so to say, and there is control over these six indriyas, then the process of dharana begins.

Dharana: the second stage of meditation

Dharana means to hold. When you hold something you have control over it, when you don't hold something then that something is free to express its own nature and throw its own tantrums. The ability to hold means the ability to control and direct the forces which are at play. Dharana is holding the

mind so that it is not swayed by the attractions and repulsions of the environment in which it lives.

Raga and dwesha, are the attractions and repulsions which have been described in the *Yoga Sutras*:

Sukha anushayi ragah,

Experiences from which we derive pleasure and to which we are attracted are known as raga.

Dukha anushayi dweshah,

Experiences from which we derive suffering and from which we run away are known as dwesha.

Raga and dwesha are the pair of opposites which yogis have talked about, pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow, etc., whatever description we may want to give. When the mind is held steady, it does not fall prey to the attractions and repulsions that influence it continuously in our normal lifestyle. When it is balanced and in harmony with itself, then that is the state of dharana.

One pointed concentration is the external aspect of dharana. Having the ability to maintain inner equipoise is the inner definition of dharana. When we have the ability to hold our own mind still, then begins the process of dhyana.

Dhyana, the third stage in meditation: awareness of the source

Dhyana is known as merger of mind, when mind falls back on itself, an implosion of mind. In explosion the forces are thrown outwards and in implosion the forces are brought to the center point, the experience of *bindu*, the experience of the source. Don't take it philosophically but practically; the source, from which our own external behavior generates. Experience of that is the state of dhyana. In this context dhyana is not just meditation, dhyana is awareness of the source, awareness of the doorway which connects the external with the internal, the manifest with the unmanifest. To be able to stand in that doorway and look outwards and inwards both at the same time, only by shifting the awareness, that

is dhyana. In order to come to this level, the process is very simple. No matter what kind of mental gymnastics you engage in, in every kind of mental gymnastics include and develop awareness.

Awareness

Now we will look into the aspect of awareness as it relates to various experiences of our life. In order to explain this concept of awareness I would like to fall back on the Sanskrit word for awareness and relate it with the process of yoga with which we are familiar, and that is Raja Yoga.

In Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* there is one sentence, the third from the beginning:

Tada drastuh swarupe avasthanam.

The main word here is drashta, the next is swarupe and the third is avasthanam. *Drashta* means seer or observer. *Swarupe* means one's own form or nature. *Avasthanam* means to become established in. This concept of drashta swarupe avasthanam represents the idea of awareness as defined in yoga, because what we know as awareness in the normal context, is the faculty of cognition which is an intellectual process.

How do we become aware of something? By extending the mind into that region. If there is pain in any part of the body then our mind goes to that part. If there is something which is visually attractive, our eyes look at it, our mind recognizes it and that recognition is translated by the mind in its own language as pleasant, attractive, beautiful. We normally use our awareness in this way.

In brief, awareness is an extension of the mind and it is of the intellectual mind, not even of the other dimensions of mind. According to yoga it is an extension of buddhi. Beyond intellect there are other forms of awareness too, this is what is known as drashta. Drashta means having the ability to see the real nature of the world. To see the real reality behind the apparent reality and to apply the wisdom, knowledge and experience of the real reality.

Awareness is not limited to one dimension of being

Now before we define what drashta is, we will have to look at something else. The mind is being extended outside in the manifest dimension. It is able to recognize and be aware of situations, environments, objects, pleasures and pain. It is the state of buddhi, and buddhi is experienced in the head space. Most of us think and act from the head space and very few of us have the ability to think and act from the heart space.

There are three spaces in the body:

1. the head space, known as *chidakasha*,
2. the heart space, known as *hridayakasha*,
3. the nether space, the lower space, known as *daharakasha*.

Usually human beings function at the level of *chidakasha* and it is quite an interesting phenomenon that when you think, when you visualize, when you dream, when you imagine something, it is happening in the head space. There is total disconnection of the heart experience. There is also total disconnection of the *daharakasha* experience. This is the lopsided quality which we have developed in our lives.

The ability to become aware, the faculty of cognition which is being experienced in the head space, in *chidakasha*, relates to buddhi, but the subtle aspect of that awareness is linked with *hridayakasha*, the heart space and feelings. It is the feelings which are linked with the vibrational aspect of life, the *pranamaya kosha*.

Inner spaces of the mind: mind is not confined to the brain

Inner body spaces	Association of Koshas	Annamaya: enclosing the whole manifest person or being
Deharakasha	Vijnanamaya: psychic sheath	
Hridayakasha	Pranamaya: pranic sheath	
Chidakasha	Manomaya: mental sheath	
Beyond	Anandamaya: cosmic - all pervasive	

Chidakasha is linked with the manomaya kosha. Hridayakasha is linked with pranamaya kosha. Daharakasha, the nether space, is linked with vijnanamaya kosha. Annamaya kosha exists outside and anandamaya kosha is beyond these three experiences. So we can even say that awareness has three forms: one which is manifesting in manomaya, another which is manifesting in pranamaya and the third which manifests in vijnanamaya.

The drashta

Now drashta, the observer, is a person who has evolved the faculties of manomaya, pranamaya and vijnanamaya and is aware of the interaction of mind in all these three levels. The drashta has control of the influences from the external world which affect our behavior, thoughts and actions – let us say the entire personality. This idea is definitely seen when we say, “Become a drashta, become an observer of yourself.”

The process of observation is not limited to buddhi. In the process of observation we come to the state of chitta and go even beyond chitta into the state of ahamkara. So in the meditative process we move from the external world into our own inner experience. It is the chidakasha awareness, chidakasha observation which is internalized to observe the states of hridayakasha and daharakasha.

Swarupe drashta; *swarupe* means one’s own form, *swa* means self, *rupa* means form. The form of the self which the drashta has to observe is the form combining the five koshas: annamaya, manomaya, pranamaya, vijnanamaya and anandamaya. That is the real swarupa, the real form of an individual, the real nature of human personality.

The observation of the body is done by becoming aware of the sensory inputs. Observation of the interaction of the body with the surrounding world is done by watching the interaction of the senses. Observation of the manomaya kosha, becoming the drashta of manomaya kosha, is done by watching the mental processes, directing the mental processes and being aware of the forces which govern our mind. Observation of pranamaya kosha, becoming the seer,

the observer, the drashta, happens when we center and focus our attention in the core of our being where the vibratory aspect is felt, is seen, is experienced. The external form, the manifest form of the vibratory dimension is emotion, feeling, sensations which do not conform to a rational pattern and over which our intellect has no control whatsoever. The raw quality of life, the unrefined nature of life, is being observed.

One cannot control fear. One experiences fear and then afterwards, when one is out of that grip of fear, one can apply buddhi in order to understand fear. But at the time of actual feeling there is no application of other mental forces. At the time of anger one cannot apply the faculties of mind to understand anger. Only afterwards can we think about it and feel guilty and depressed; at the moment when we are experiencing it there is no control. Many things that we experience in the form of hatred, anger, frustration, anxiety, inner anguish, jealousy, etc., are tamasic manifestations of pranamaya kosha in the external world. The sattwic manifestation of pranamaya kosha is the total opposite – absolute harmony, the feeling of love and compassion, the feeling of devotion and freedom. There is no suppression of any kind and these feelings are emotions of the inner being. These feelings are not intellectual activities of the mind, they are the outcome of harmony in pranamaya kosha, the vibratory level of the body.

Becoming aware, or extending the faculty of cognition at this level happens in the practices of both pratyahara and dharana. At the mental level, manomaya kosha, there are only the practices of pratyahara, not dharana. At the pranamaya level are the practices of pratyahara and dharana both combined. At the deeper level of daharakasha the practices of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana are all three combined together. We will call this *sanyama*, the combination of three practices or three states of performance and cognition in pratyahara, dharana and dhyana.

So then we can consider the daharakasha aspect and vijñanamaya kosha. Please remember that vijñanamaya kosha relates to the deeper mind, not the manifest external mind

influenced by the senses, hence the name 'vijñana'. *Jñana* means knowledge; absolute knowledge is *vijñana*. In the state where absolute knowledge of oneself as a being, and the state of being, takes place, there the manifest and the unmanifest aspects of consciousness are experienced as one. The so-called unconscious does not hold any mysteries and the subconscious does not hold any mysteries, they all become part of the mental activity, uninfluenced by the *gunas* and the senses.

So it is the power of knowing and the power of realizing that knowing which is awareness. In our own practice we have to be very clear that we are not to extend our mind to one area only and say I have become aware of that. I don't look at a symbol and say that I have become aware of that symbol. I don't look at a pain or a pleasant sensation and say that I have become aware of that pain or pleasant sensation and therefore I am a *drashta*. The state of *drashta* is observing the *annamaya*, *manomaya*, *pranamaya* and *vijñanamaya* levels at the same time.

Being established beyond the limitations of the conscious mind

The final word in this sutra is *avasthanam* which means to become established in. When we become established in the state of observation, in the state of knowing and realization, then there is absolutely no instinctive activity, no unconscious activity, which manifests in our life. We have come into this room quite often and we have looked around. Now, can you close your eyes and just say how many photographs are hanging on the right wall or on the left wall, or what there is behind you? We have definitely looked all around but we have not applied our mind there. *Buddhi* is there but our *buddhi* has not been extended consciously to see four photographs are there and five photographs are here, etc. However, another part of your being knows, without conscious knowledge, how many there are in the room. It knows how many people there are in the room without the need to count and this has been proved, by hypnosis for example.

There was a person who went to a hypnotist for therapy and without the knowledge of the person, the hypnotist conducted an experiment to see the power of the mind. This research was published in journals in the United States and it was incredible research. There was an indoor plant in the hypnotist's room and during the session the hypnotist asked a question, "Can you give the number of leaves on the potted plant in the corner of this room?" Without any delay the exact number of leaves was given to the hypnotist, and it took the hypnotist about forty minutes to count all the leaves afterwards. This was one of the first investigations into the powers of the mind.

We think the conscious aspect of the mind is the most powerful but it is not, nor is it the most active. Rather it is the most confined and limited aspect of the mind. You are sitting here now, but while you are sitting here you are listening to what I am saying and trying to understand it. At the same time you are not aware of your own body, your posture, your movements, the blinking of the eyelids, the breathing. We are not aware of these so-called autonomic, unconscious, physical activities.

Why not – because the mind is active and alert, it should be able to instantly observe what is happening? The conscious mind is the most limited form of mind which one can ever encounter in life. As you move deeper into the subconscious there is more power, there is more force in it. As you move into the unconscious you will find unlimited power and force. If you move into the superconscious level then of course it is a transcendental state.

Yogis have described different states of mind. If you get an opportunity, read the *Mandukya Upanishad*. It is a tiny Upanishad, only having about twelve verses, but in these twelve verses the entire nature of the mind has been described accurately. If you can decipher it you will find that every other kind of knowledge of the human mind is foreshadowed by these twelve verses. It talks about the conscious mind in one verse, the different things that happen at the conscious level, the interaction of the consciousness with the senses, with the

environment, etc. It speaks of the subconscious in one verse. It speaks of the unconscious, nidra state in two verses, but when it speaks of the superconscious, the turiya state, then the rest of the verses are given to it. The *Mandukya* describes the actual process of inner experiences and the interaction of awareness with these different states of mind.

Training the awareness in meditation

Now we move into the practical aspect. How do we train ourselves to experience the awareness? In the normal course of events the awareness is always divided into three parts. The major part of the awareness is centered on oneself, the desire, I. Another part of the awareness is centered on the aspiration, the goal, the aim. Another part of the awareness is centered in the process which we are adopting to attain what is desirable.

Paramahamsaji used to describe the process of meditation as an awareness which consists of three parts in the beginning, changing to two parts, and becoming just one awareness. He used to say that at first this awareness is divided by the meditator in the form of:

1. 'I am meditating' or 'I am the meditator',
2. awareness of the object of meditation,
3. awareness of the process of meditation.

We talk about the dualistic awareness of me and you but actually our awareness is not dualistic, we can call it trilistic. When, in trilistic awareness, one part is subdued and two parts are prominent, as we begin to identify more and more with myself and the object, and less with the process, then it changes into dualistic perception. Because the effort or the process is an integral part of any achievement or any desire, we never apply our mind to it, we feel that it happens spontaneously and naturally. However in yoga, when we are learning to develop the faculty of observation in all the dimensions of annamaya, manomaya, pranamaya and vijñanamaya, we have to also become aware of the effort, the process. It is not only me, the person desiring something, and the object which is being desired, which are the only two realities in life.

Initially when one begins the practice of meditation one has to develop awareness of 'I am', awareness of the object of meditation, 'That is what I want to achieve, that is the state I want to reach', and awareness of the process that one is adopting in order to come to that realization or achievement. When you have become comfortable in the process, then awareness is transferred from the process into the aim and into yourself, so only two remain. Eventually there comes a time when the mind focuses itself on the realization, the attainment, and then there is only one, singular awareness and that is of attainment.

So even in awareness we see a change from three to two to one and in this process we find the intensity and the power of observation increases, so much so that it is due to the increase of the power of observation and awareness that we are eventually able to merge with what has been desired. This is a very beautiful concept of yoga. In other words, just to make you see the beauty of it, I would say it is experiencing the macrocosmic awareness in a microcosmic attainment.

What we have desired is one thing here, one point, one state, but in order to come to that point we have extended our awareness and enveloped it. We have become that state of attainment. That is dhyana and that is the concept of drashta, being established in the inherent nature.

When we practise asana, the body which is being moved, and the movements, have to be combined with awareness. This awareness is not only physical, it goes deeper into the body, into the experience of the subtle movements of energy. This is because the aim of asana is not only to release tension from the body but also to awaken the pranic forces which are within the body. Similarly, when you practise pranayama, the mind has to be applied in the practice. Initially we have to learn how to apply the total forces of the mind, later on it becomes a very natural and spontaneous process. Initially we may have to sit down and close our eyes, be comfortable and practise meditation. Once we have learned the art of meditation then even with the eyes open and sitting in any odd posture, one can experience that state of meditation.

Apply the mind first, beginning with the external dimension, with the body, with the senses, and each faculty of each sense has to be developed more and more. We hear sounds. We let our mind become like the microphone of a tape recorder which picks up each and every sound. We begin to isolate one sound from the next and separate them in our own mind. When we see something, you know we see straight but there are many things coming in from the peripheral vision that have to be seen, analyzed, observed. Sensations have to be observed. In this way, the faculty of each sensory organ, the karmendriyas and the gyanendriyas, has to be fully developed. After they are fully developed we can begin to develop awareness of the inner mind.

I have never agreed with people who tend to ignore the sensory experiences by saying they are irrelevant, and concentrate on inner experiences thinking that they are more relevant. No, both are equally important because they represent two aspects of human nature, two attitudes of mind. If one doesn't have the ability to extend the consciousness outwards one will never gain the ability to experience the awakened consciousness inside. So extension is important and then after the senses are fully developed, we begin to work with the mind. Awareness of mind is the key which eventually unlocks the door to the mysteries of the human consciousness.

The symbol as a guide

This awareness then has to evolve into the image of a symbol. This is another important point, because when you begin to work with your mind you will come to different experiences where something is there, and you can identify with it, and then there are times when nothing is there, so with what do you identify? In the state of *shoonyata*, in the state of void, in space, how do we know, in the absence of any clear indications and directions, which way we are moving? Which way is north, which is south, which is east, which is west, which is forward, which is backward? We don't know because there are no points of reference in our consciousness.

Points of reference can be made up in the conscious mind, not beyond, because the conscious mind is always subject to the experience and influence of the senses. Beyond the conscious mind is the subconscious. Not just the superficial subconscious, the main body of the subconscious mind and the main body of the unconscious mind, where there are no defined parameters, nor references. At that time one has to evolve the vision or the awareness of a symbol, and the symbol becomes the point of reference. It holds the alertness of mind at one point and does not allow it to dissipate into nothingness, into the *shoonya*, into the void.

So, in the final stages of awareness one has to focus on a symbol which is the yantra of consciousness. To explain what a yantra is I will just explain through the word mantra. Mantra is made up of two words: *man*, meaning *manas* or the thinking, external, active mind plus *tra*, representing liberation. So *mantra* means liberation of the mind. *Yantra* is defined in a similar way: *tra* meaning liberation and *yan* is from *yana*, which means vehicle. The vehicle in this sense relates to yantra being the tool of consciousness which is evolving. Liberating the consciousness from the bondage of the senses is the purpose of yantra. Yantra in this context is a symbol. Whether it is a point of light or a complex geometrical symbol makes no difference though later, if we begin to observe the complexities of mind, the yantras become more complicated. If we maintain a simple awareness and we use that awareness as the basis of our development, then yantra can be just one image – it can be a point of light.

The symbol is the reference point which does not allow the mind to experience shoonyata, because if the mind began to experience shoonyata without proper conditioning or training there would be lunacy in life. One would go mad. I have seen people go mad who have not followed this yogic advice. They have lost touch with reality. They live in a dimension of fantasy and the psychiatrists collect the rent.

So the symbol is definitely an aid in the development of consciousness. Anything can be used as a symbol. The vibration of om could be used as the symbol on which we focus

our awareness and concentration. While chanting the mantra om we can create the visual image of a flame at the eyebrow center. That visual image is used as a symbol for the senses, for focusing manomaya. Vibrations are used as symbols for focusing pranamaya. One pointed concentration is used for vijñanamaya focusing.

So the symbol can take different forms and when we are able to merge our normal mind with the symbol then a new perception of life is experienced. This has been the yogic theory of how one can progress on the path of evolution.

Gayatri gives the bija mantras of the lokas

There was a question about the reason for chanting the *Gayatri mantra* during a meditation practice. As far as my understanding goes, when we attempt to go into a meditative state then it is not only the mind which has to focus and become silent but also the energies which are moving in the body. In meditation we try to become aware of the mind. Fine, no problem, if you can be aware of the mind you are many steps ahead of other people who are not aware of the mind. However, at the same time an effort has to be made to harmonize the pranic activities in the five pranas and in the chakras.

The way to harmonize the pranic activity is through creating a set of vibrations within our body whose frequency and resonance can stop the dissipated activity of the pranas and channel the pranic forces. When the pranic forces are channelled it becomes easier to experience the inner self. This can be done through any mantra, no doubt. With the chanting of om alone it is possible to harmonize and balance the pranic activity within our system.

However, when we use the Gayatri mantra, the first seven syllables of Gayatri: *Om bhuh, Om bhuvah, Om swah, Om mahah, Om, janah, Om tapah, Om satya*, are the bija mantras which relate to the fields of consciousness, the lokas, within the chakras. Each chakra also has a specific bija mantra. From mooladhara to ajna they are: *lam, vam, ram, yam, ham, om*. The experience of consciousness which is contained in each

chakra is also influenced and affected by its bija mantra. The bija mantras of the chakras are to awaken the pranic force of the chakras, and the bija mantras of the lokas are to harmonize the fields of consciousness within the dimension of the chakras. Therefore, before any form of meditation practice, especially in the advanced stages, it is better that we begin to control the mental vrittis. This is done by first balancing energy manifestations in various dimensions of human consciousness, and that is why the Gayatri mantra is done.

Remember the right application of knowledge

So please remember one thing, it is not knowledge but the right application of knowledge which is important. Don't have the concept that knowledge is the final thing. There is a statement in the Ishavasya Upanishad which says: "Absence of knowledge definitely leads one to the darkness of ignorance. But knowledge when not applied rightly, leads one to greater darkness than ignorance."

This statement has been the basic philosophy of yoga. It is for this reason that yoga has emphasized again and again, "Learn to experience and stop rationalizing. Learn to experience and don't use the intellect." People have reacted in their own ways to this statement. Some people have even gone to the extent of saying that yoga does not emphasize the use of intellect. They are wrong. Intellect is definitely a force to be dealt with, but the force of intellect is to be used to transcend intellect, not to build up the structure of intellect. There has to be wisdom in that knowledge. Knowledge is knowing, fine. Wisdom is? It is not just knowledge. Wisdom is something beyond, something deeper than knowledge. It is knowing when to use the knowledge properly. Being at the right place at the right time, doing the right thing, that is wisdom.

Wisdom is the aim of knowledge, not mental confusion. Therefore wisdom is to be gained by developing personal experience and then yoga becomes a very simple process of attainment. Yoga does not ask for any form of renunciation.

Yoga only says have discrimination, have non-attachment, don't be attracted and attached to your actions, nor to the result of those actions, nor to yourself. This awareness is not the concept of renunciation. Renunciation has absolutely no part to play in yoga. It plays a role in sannyasa life but in the life of a yoga practitioner renunciation has no role to play. It is only *viveka*, discrimination, *jnana*, wisdom, *vairagya*, not being bound by the attractions of life, having the ability to remain free, and *prapti*, attainment, being aware of what you have realized and known. These are the basic principles of yoga. It is in this spirit that you should understand the application and the role of yoga in your own life.

Holland



Applying Yogic Knowledge

There are many forms of relationships, but one thing is important, opening up of heart and opening up of mind. We have conditioned our mind, we have also conditioned our behavior, interactions and attitudes. The aim of the spiritual seeker is to go beyond this conditioning so that we can realize and appreciate the inherent qualities that exist within us and use those qualities to come to a point of understanding of human nature.

Learning to apply knowledge

We have to learn how to apply the knowledge and the understanding which we have in our life. I feel that this is going to be my role here. I am not going to teach anything new, although if you wish I can do that too, but I personally would not like to do so. It is necessary that we learn to apply what we already know, and improve ourselves through the proper appreciation of that understanding and knowledge.

How many of us actually try to apply what we have learned in yoga in our life? Our application, our understanding and our practise of yoga does not go beyond three areas. The first area is the physical dimension, the practice of asanas and pranayamas in order to feel good physically, and even this application of the physical aspect of yoga is not the real nature or aim of asana or pranayama.

The second area of application is in the psychic realm where we try to express deeper layers of ourselves through

the practices of meditation, but the knowledge which we gain about the self in our practices of meditation is never applied in life constructively. Meditation simply becomes a process of avoiding stressful situations in life in order to experience temporary inner harmony.

The third area is in our own life, by becoming aware of the limitations and the forces of our own personality, but even application of this yogic understanding is limited. We tend to impose certain disciplines upon ourselves and ultimately are not able to handle and manage such disciplines.

These are the three major areas where we see the application of yoga but despite our best intentions we are never able to experience the completeness of yoga nor the fullness of life. So this is the theme; we need to understand one thing, and that is the proper application of yogic principles in our life. This is going to be our effort while we are here. So live here like you would in an ashram, with total awareness, with a desire to work on yourself, with a desire to help others to also work on themselves in the spirit of joy and celebration.

Flowing in the present moment

The spirit of joy and celebration is necessary. In my opinion life should not be taken seriously, rather every moment of life should be a joyous moment. We have suffered for a long time with our tensions and frustrations, aggressions and anxiety, and all these have restricted the expression of our personality. A yogi who lives in the moment does not experience the tension and frustrations of life. They exist, no doubt, and they continue to effect human nature, but a yogi must know how to convert these moments of frustration and anxiety into moments of happiness and joy. This is the real teaching, the real essence of yoga.

Enough of struggling and the beginning of flowing! If we know how to flow in life then that is the real education which we can give ourselves, but in order to flow one has to live in the present. Human beings have this tendency of living in the past and becoming worried about the future and totally

ignoring the present. For human beings the present does not exist, only the past and the future. We think about what has happened in the past, we worry about the future and because of that worry we simply totally ignore the present. In yoga we derive knowledge and wisdom from the experiences of the past and enhance our creativity in the present and the future is a mystery. The unfoldment of the future is, in itself, another beauty to be appreciated.

So while we are here let us live in the present and try to improve ourselves today, try to attain that harmony within ourselves today and try to attain that inner peace within ourselves today. By living from moment to moment we can experience the dawn of a beautiful future.

Festival of Light

Yesterday in India we celebrated *Diwali* which is the Festival of Light, and today we are celebrating it here. There is a song of Diwali which, when translated into English means:

*When the day is dark and dreary
And the way is hard to find
Don't let your heart be weary
Just keep this thought in mind:*

*It's better to light one little candle
than to stumble in the dark,
Better far that you light one little candle,
All you need is a tiny spark.*

*If we all say a prayer that the world should be free
A wonderful dawn of a new world we would see
And if everyone lights one little candle
What a bright world this will be.*

It is in that spirit that we are meeting here. We have not only lit the candle in the room today, we have lit one within our hearts. When eventually we go our own ways it should be with the *sankalpa*, the resolution, that we take the light with us. So it is in the spirit of light that we are here together. Light has a beautiful nature. You can have one hundred candles

lit but try differentiating the light which they are radiating, one from the other. It is not possible, they have become one. So externally we may look like little candles burning in our own space but in essence and reality the light of everyone is one and the same. This is the message of Diwali and also the message of yoga.

The origin of yoga

Before you and I ever appeared on this planet and before our immediate forefathers appeared, primitive man walked on the earth and looked at his body and thought, “What is it?” When he became aware of the mind and its processes and tried to enquire into its nature, it was at that moment that the emergence of yoga took place. Yoga represents the aspect of discovery of the self. In the course of time we came to realize that we are a combination of three faculties. Human beings combine within themselves the faculties of head, heart and hands and in order to live their lives fully it is necessary to integrate these three faculties. For this one needs to adopt a system of life involving effort also.

This effort which we perform externally, mentally and spiritually, and the lifestyle that we need to lead in order to progress and evolve, eventually became known as yoga. There is plenty of evidence in the ancient cultures to prove that they were not ignorant of yogic philosophy. Among the remains of ancient civilizations in Scandinavian, South American, North African and Asian countries, remnants of yoga are seen. However, in the course of history, due to geophysical or political changes, yoga disappeared from many civilizations and cultures. It continued to exist and was preserved in India, and therefore in this modern age the credit goes to India.

The classical language of yoga, which is based on the mantras which we use in yoga, is called *Sanskrit*, and it is a very precise language. However, definitely yoga is the heritage of humanity and the meaning of the word *yoga* is harmony and union.

Emissaries of yoga

People were not ready to accept yoga earlier because it was associated with renunciation and because it was preserved in India, propagated from India and it was associated with Indian religious beliefs. These concepts are false. Although yoga was preserved in India by a group of people known as sannyasins, sannyasins were supposed to have renounced the conditions of society. They were supposed to work on themselves and develop a definite inner vision.

The practices of yoga which they later began to propagate were associated with their lifestyle. Therefore it was felt that yoga was part of inner mysticism and that it emphasized the aspects of renouncing the world but we have to understand that yoga is different from any form of mysticism or religion. It has also been the experience of many people that the practise of yoga gives a deeper understanding of their own religion.

The person who tried to bring yoga out of the depths of mysticism was Swami Vivekananda. He became the first emissary of yoga to the world. After him came many other eminent personalities who tried their best to make people understand that yoga is a system that can be applied in our normal life in order to experience physical health, mental equilibrium and inner harmony. A person who worked very hard to bring yoga to the masses in recent times was Swami Sivananda. He made yoga accessible to every person regardless of who they were and what they did.

His disciples contributed a lot to the development of yoga as it is in the world today. We don't have to tell you the names of all his disciples, they are quite numerous and are well respected authorities on the subject. One of the disciples of Swami Sivananda was Paramahansa Satyananda. Out of the entire group of disciples, Swami Sivananda only initiated Swami Satyananda into the *Paramahansa* order which represents the highest tradition of sannyasa.

Paramahansa Satyananda was given the mandate to spread yoga from door to door and from shore to shore. Keeping this mission in mind, Paramahansa Satyananda

worked hard and established the first movement of yoga known as the International Yoga Fellowship. It is an organization which aims to bring together people who are interested in the propagation of yoga and in working together, combining their efforts in the common cause of human upliftment.

In 1963 he established the Bihar School of Yoga from where he could propagate his system and knowledge of yoga. Today the Bihar School of Yoga has grown into a reputable national institution. It is also recognized by the government of India to be a place which is preserving the national heritage, and from where swamis work with yoga in society and with individuals.

Yoga from door to door and shore to shore

In the beginning, the form of yoga teaching was in a classroom environment. People were sent out to conduct seminars, classes, courses and conventions, people were trained as yoga teachers, people were trained in the sannyasa way of life. After completing their training people would leave or stay depending on their choice but whatever they did it was always inspired by yoga and sannyasa.

In 1988 Paramahansa Satyananda renounced the ashram. He left the ashram and gave the mandate to propagate yoga from door to door and shore to shore to the following generation. The work of yoga continues with a new impetus in India and around the world.

To give you some idea of what work is being done now – in the past we had been teaching yoga in different industries and corporations of the government. The method of teaching was in the form of stress management. Later on we also incorporated aspects of business management through the principles of yoga. The National Petroleum Company which is the topmost Indian institution for petroleum in India, gave us the charge of its human resources development program for two years. During those two years we used to go to their offices and work out a program to develop human resources. As a result of the program we found that the productivity of

the company increased, the conflicts between the employees and the employers reduced drastically and the overall growth of the entire industry took a very positive step. This became our first project in the late eighties, where we made an attempt to bring yoga to the different strata of human society.

The International Yoga Convention

Then, as many of you know, last year in Munger we held an International Conference on yoga in which many of you participated and gave your support and love to yoga. That convention became the turning point for the propagation of yoga in India. In that conference, which was one of the biggest of its kind in the country, 660 people came from 32 countries outside India, 6,000 delegates came from 20 states of India and there was an equal number of local delegates. Let me tell you, India is not like Europe and Munger is definitely not like this place, so to have a yoga conference where 14,000 people attended was not a joke. Many eminent personalities, educationalists, doctors and scientists came and contributed their thoughts, their understanding and their experience. At that time a Charter was developed and promoted to integrate the yogic work around the world and since that time, yoga has taken on a different dimension altogether.

The integration of yoga with the Indian medical system

We were requested by the government of the state of Bihar, where we live, to teach yoga therapy in all the medical colleges within the state. Out of the nine medical colleges we have taught yoga therapy and given training in three institutions. As a result of the success of these programs, the doctors and students and the state government have made a recommendation to the Indian Medical Council to incorporate yoga in its medical syllabus.

Right now we are in the process of identifying 32 diseases which will only be treated through yogic practices. Only recently a resolution has been passed that every practising doctor within the state must undergo yoga therapy training.

This is a very big step for the state to take. If the trend continues, then in a few years time we shall see a dramatic change in the therapy applied in society. Another area of this medical teaching is that every new doctor will know yoga therapy and in the absence of medicine they can use yoga therapy to provide better health and help to the community. Yoga will be recognized as the front line therapy, not just as an alternative therapy.

The Indian medical system is not a loose system. It is as prestigious as any institution in Europe or in any other developed country. It is very strict about what is accepted as good, and quite capable of rejecting anything, so their acceptance is definitely a very big step for yoga.

Yoga in prisons

Another project is teaching yoga at 19 prisons within the state in order to reform the criminal mind. Up to now ongoing yoga classes have been conducted in four prisons. Each person is monitored by the state department of prisons, psychologists, behavior analysts and also yoga teachers. It is only the future which will tell us if the yoga program has been successful in reforming their minds or not, because we are not interested in short term yoga programs of ten days, a month or even three months. We are interested in long time programs in which we can work with the specific aim of changing ourselves. We want to look for long term results and not short term benefits.

Yoga in the army

The third project is teaching yoga in the army. There is no moral conflict about it. After all there are many psychological problems in the army and people suffer because of those psychological problems, their behavior, attitude, personality and whole nature changes drastically.

We have conducted yoga camps in the highest battlefield in the world in the remote Himalayas at 7,000 meters. That is the border between five countries: India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Russia. The soldiers who are deployed there suffer

from acute isolation syndromes. Imagine two people sitting in a bunker day and night, shivering with cold, staring out at a white sheet of snow for months together, not seeing a third person at all, feeling deprived, isolated, trigger happy, tense and depressed. Apart from these symptoms they have many more psychological problems and one of them is the fear of becoming impotent. Of course the rarified atmosphere plays havoc with the body and brain so we have taught yoga for the betterment of their physical and mental difficulties. The second camp we conducted was in Ladhak and the third camp was conducted in the desert areas for the desert deployments. The results have been very positive.

Appreciating the broader aspect of yoga

By telling you these things it is my wish that you understand that there can be a broad application of the yogic systems in society in order to develop human nature and potential. It is this understanding which we will need to evolve in the course of our own study of yoga. If yoga were a self oriented process of evolution then I would not accept it, because it would then isolate an individual from the other beings and create a further split in our interaction and relationships. The beauty I see is that it has a universal aspect as well as the individual aspect. It should be our effort to understand the universal along with the individual aspect, and only then can we truly appreciate the beauty of this system which is the heritage of humanity. It is a thought of yesterday, a science of today and a culture of tomorrow.

Yoga for rural communities in India

Yoga training is also being provided in the villages of Bihar. So far we have only chosen four backward, deprived communities. There we are imparting yogic training with a special thrust on their social development. Swamis, along with volunteers, go to the villages and live there for some time. They visit families door to door and ask them about their difficulties in relation to health, family, finance and society. These swamis and volunteers in the villages raise teams of

the local people, this workforce in turn provides a community resource. It can take any form: cleaning the drains of the village, cleaning the roads, painting the houses, giving yoga classes or helping people with their health and providing visits from medical teams.

In these places I have chosen three subjects to be taught: mind management, money management and time management. These projects have been very successful in that we have been able to touch people from all the different communities and religions, and there have been many social changes too within the community. The areas that have been chosen are the most crime infested areas in our state and the highlight of the program has been people taking the sankalpa, the resolution, not to commit any more crimes. They have surrendered their firearms to the government. They have begun developing, with their own effort, co-operatives within the community in order to become financially self sufficient.

The next project which we have undertaken is taking place in the most backward and deprived area of Bihar and, in fact, of the whole country. There we are helping the rural community by constructing houses and donating these houses to the people. We have also constructed a small hospital to provide free medical aid. Our priorities in this area are firstly to provide each family with shelter, secondly to provide the eldest member of each family with permanent employment, thirdly to provide the youngest member of each family with education and fourthly to provide free medical facilities for the entire community.

The shelters we construct for them are along the lines of mud houses using the latest technology. Recently an earth brick maker was donated from South America and another one from India. With these we make our own bricks and make houses for the people. Apart from that we also make fire bricks because mud bricks are generally sun dried, they are not fired. Our wish is that whatever technology we use in the rural areas should conform with the natural landscape. All these jobs sannyasins are doing with the help of volunteers.

The average size of the houses is four rooms, each three and a half meters by three and a half meters, with a kitchen, toilet and bath facilities. Some families are also provided with a shop and all the material for it so that they can earn their own livelihood. If you ever happen to come to India you should go and visit these places where we are working and see for yourself.

Sometimes I wonder why we did not know of these technologies ten or fifteen years back. Everything that we are using is natural. Instead of wood we use bamboo, bamboo windows, bamboo doors, beautiful doors and windows, and these rammed earth houses and mudbrick houses are more comfortable than the homes which are commercially made using cement, steel and other things. The construction is so cheap that, just to give you an idea of the cost which is incurred in each construction, the total cost of a four room house with toilet, kitchen and facilities is only 25,000 rupees, that is about 1,000 dollars. Each house carries a plaque with an inscription that this house has been constructed with the contributions of such and such person for such and such person.

Recently someone has also donated a dish antenna with satellite communications so that the rural people can be exposed to the other cultures of the world. We are contemplating building a community center in the region where they are exposed to the world cultures. Paramahansa Satyananda, who lives in that region, also helps us in many ways, in his own way, helping the community.

Social service

Slowly the work of social service in the community is also expanding. Even in times of crisis, times of emergency, floods, fires and natural calamities, volunteers go to assist the community which is affected. In 1989 there was a dry spell in the town of Munger and we were requested to help provide water. So, in the month of June, which is the hottest time in India, everyone who was in the ashram spread out throughout the town. We dug tube wells with bamboo down

to the depth of 100 meters. Within twenty days there were forty tube wells in the town of Munger and the volunteers and swamis were falling with sunstroke, sick everyday, but still they all continued.

We have also made a bus stand in the town of Munger which is easily identifiable because it has the best road in the whole of Bihar. I don't know if you are familiar with Indian roads? The maximum speed on the highway is about twenty five kilometers an hour and it is actually very much like fighting off space invaders in the car. You have to avoid the pigs, the chickens, the children, the people, the buffaloes, the bullock carts. In fact you have to avoid anything and everything you can find in the road, if there is a road. Therefore we pride ourselves on this work which we have done: the construction of the bus stand with the best, undamaged piece of road in the whole of the state.

Yoga in education

Along with the continuing yoga work we are also establishing the Bihar Yoga Bharati which will provide us with more opportunities to take yoga into the academic world. A lot of work has been done in education. Yogic training is now a part of the national educational system, and in the state of Bihar we have trained about 2,000 high school teachers and given them a special syllabus for teaching yoga to children. Besides this, our branch ashrams are involved in continuously providing training to high school teachers in different parts of the country.

There has been a natural acceptance of yoga in India but the main reason is that it is recognized as a science by the people who have adopted it. Don't think or believe that yoga is easily accepted by the Indians. It has been part of their culture but they have always misunderstood yoga also. It was always taken as a part of mysticism but now as researches are being conducted in different parts of the world by different doctors and scientists, the validity of yoga practices is becoming known to the Indian public.

Yoga in different countries

There has been a great revival of yoga in different parts of the world too. I went to Australia during the month of May and we planned some projects for the yoga movement. One of the projects is the establishment of a holistic therapy center within the yoga framework, where we can make all the different kinds of therapy from East and West available under one roof and try to work for the development of human health in a proper way. There are other projects also which I shall tell you about when we have started on them.

This visit to Europe is to establish a reconnection with the mentality of Europe and to see what specialized yoga work can happen here, because it is my deep feeling that we need to develop a vision of how yoga can be applied for the growth of different levels of society. One idea has come up during this trip to Europe, which is setting up a constituent college of Bihar Yoga Bharati in some part of Europe. In that college higher education in yoga would be offered. It would also serve as a link between the Bihar Yoga Bharati in India and people here who could not afford the journey or the time to spend in India. This yoga college would also offer diplomas and degrees in three faculties so that we could go deeper into our own knowledge and understanding of yoga, and obtain a higher level of yogic knowledge, beyond the yoga teacher level.

The meaning of yoga

I have my own understanding and opinion about yoga. For me, yoga is a link between the physical dimension and the spiritual dimension of human experience; in order to harmonize the physical dimension we need to evolve an understanding of our inner nature. This understanding of our inner nature can be developed when we learn how to manage, handle and transform our mind. In fact if we study the classical yoga texts we find this idea very prominent in them. For example if we look at the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, in the first three sutras he has described the whole process of yoga. The first sutra is: *Atha yoga anushasanam*, normally translated

as, “Now begins the instruction in yoga”. The second sutra says, “Yoga is controlling the patterns of the mind”. The third sutra is, “By controlling our mind we become established in our real nature”. These three sutras are the most important ones which tell us of the yogic process but let me give you my views on these three sutras.

If I ask anybody, “What is the meaning of yoga according to Sage Patanjali?”, I’ll get a standard answer, “Controlling the mental impressions”. However there is another important word which we need to understand, and that is *anushasanam*, which comes in the first sutra. The first sutra actually means that yoga is a process of obtaining inner discipline and governing the subtle aspects of human personality. Obtaining inner discipline, being able to govern the expressions of the deeper personality, is yoga. Disciplining, here, means harmonizing the self. Discipline is not an imposed structure of rules and laws by which we have to live life in a peculiar way. Rather it is a way by which we can re-educate ourselves in relation to our inner nature and by which we are able to express the harmony of our inner nature.

So, finding that harmony of the inner nature is the main role of yoga. It then becomes possible to control the external manifestations of the mind which is affected by the senses, objects, the environment, time and space. When we are able to find harmony in such expressions of our inner nature, and when we are able to direct the forces of the mind which interact with senses, objects and the external dimension, then we experience the transcendental state of being.

Somebody once asked Paramahansa Satyananda whether it was possible to attain self realization through the practices of yoga in this life or not. His answer was a straight and simple no. He explained his answer by saying that what we know as a state of realization is a transcendental state of consciousness, and with a human nature, human mind and human brain which is not transcendental it becomes difficult to experience this transcendental quality.

For this reason also, Christ has said, “Let those hear who have ears and see who have eyes.” We all have ears and

eyes but we are not able to hear or see. What do we have to see? What do we have to hear? We have to experience the transcendental nature of being by transforming our own personality. The systems of practices which give us this understanding, such as yoga, prepare our body and prepare our mind to experience the higher reality. Therefore the aim of our practice also has to change. We have come to yoga in order to experience something different, beyond human comprehension. This is one of the aspirations of people when they practise yoga, "Let me see something different to what I normally see or experience", but our effort has to be in transforming ourselves.

When you plant a seed in the ground, then what do you take care of? You take care of the seed, protecting it by giving it proper fertilizer, by removing the weeds which surround it, by giving enough water, heat and other nutrients which help the seed to grow. When the seed grows we have to continue taking care of the roots too. In this way the seed eventually becomes a tree and the beauty of the fruit or the beauty of the flower which we experience is an outcome of the care which we have taken of the plant. In the same way we have to work with ourselves, and the flowering of our nature will be the result of the care that we have given to our body, mind and emotions. This care helps the transformation of the seed potential in our own life. If you ignore the care the tree will be sick, flowers and fruit may not even appear.

That is the principle of yoga too. Whether it is realization, samadhi, moksha or any other transcendental experience, they are the outcome of a harmonious human nature, a balanced personality, mind and body. So yoga becomes a process through which we can work on ourselves, observe the interaction of our inner nature with the outer dimension, and transform and sublimate the qualities which we express in our life. Then ultimately we can experience the universality of transcendental consciousness which fills our entire being with joy, with happiness, with peace.

In the last stage of yoga we can become one with the entire universe, but in the process of being one there is also

a natural and spontaneous expression of the human qualities which manifest physically in the form of love, compassion, affection and devotion. It is within the right of everyone to attain this state but you must have the determination, the will and the strength to follow it through. We have to be alert and aware in life. We need to have the ability to discriminate and to feel sincerity within. This is the change that we hope yoga will bring into our life and for this we have to be open. One has to be an actor and not a reactor, definitely not an atomic reactor nor an emotional one.

Satsang

What is the meaning of psychosynthesis and how does it relate to yoga?

I have read about psychosynthesis and I have come across people who have done it and who teach it. There is definitely a point of merging between the yogic system and psychosynthesis and at the same time psychosynthesis is not different to a yogic process.

What is the meaning of psychosynthesis? Synthesizing the psyche, and this happens when we are able to come to terms with our inner states of imbalance which disrupt the natural harmony of life. Identification of the different personalities which psychosynthesis talks about is the process through which, by identifying with a nature which has been manifesting within us, in the form of a weakness, aggression, fear or strength, we are made to observe their interaction within us and to come to terms with them. After giving it much thought, and after understanding the process of psychosynthesis, I have come to a conclusion. I don't want you to accept it if you disagree but I'm just explaining my views on the subject.

In the state of pratyahara, we go through the process of psychosynthesis in a different way. I'm sure you are familiar with the word pratyahara and what it means. There are different stages of self observation. Pratyahara is not meditation, nor is pratyahara concentration. Meditation is known as dhyana. Concentration is known as dharana. Self

observation, recognition of the present conditions in life, in mind, in nature, in human personality, adjusting with them, accepting them and transforming their manifest force into a force which can provide us with inner harmony, is the state of *pratyahara*.

Pratyahara is generally translated as the withdrawal of the mind from the sense objects but it is not that. In the absence of a proper definition this definition has been used but the real meaning of *pratyahara* is feeding the inner mind. *Ahara* means to feed, *prati* meaning withdrawing. What is the result of feeding? Why do we eat food? Physically, externally? Because we desire a sense of fulfillment by overcoming the desire of hunger and thirst. This fulfillment provides us with satisfaction, strength, energy, contentment and eradication of the needs of the body.

In the same way we feed the inner mind. Our mind is continuously being fed by impressions, *samskaras*, thoughts, desires, ambition, hopes, love, feelings, compassion, affection and the list is endless. One thing happens here. When we eat physically then we also eliminate what we have eaten, right? After eating, the food is processed, whatever nutrition is derived is taken by the body and the waste matter is thrown out of the body. Now this doesn't happen in the mental dimension. We derive satisfaction. We eat pleasure, sensorial, sensual, emotional, intellectual, we feed ourselves internally but we never eliminate the waste product of the food which we have eaten mentally. That creates mental constipation. It can also create mental diarrhoea and dysentery.

When we are facing mental constipation there is an imbalance. We are not accepting our inner nature nor the manifestations of our inner nature. On the other hand, when there is diarrhoea and dysentery of the emotions, of the mind, the intellect and the psyche, then these manifestations become a very strong force. They come out in the form of aggression, jealousy, hatred and fear. These are the manifest aggressions and because we lack an understanding of our inner nature there is always a very deep conflict of self acceptance or self adjustment.

In pratyahara we go through this process according to the yogic theory which is being the witness, the *drashta*, the observer. We try to look at the totality of our mind and its interactions with the environment, with the senses, with the ego, with the ambitions, etc. Those people who find this method too dry, too strong, may find it easy to go through a process like psychosynthesis where there is an identification of the inner personality. After that identification one gains the ability to adjust, to accommodate and to live with it. There are some people who can thus derive inner strength to channel that inner personality in the right direction. So both psychosynthesis and pratyahara work at the same level and the aim of both, one through the process of observation and the other through a process of identification, is to attain synthesis of the psychic human nature. That is where the two systems meet.

What is the meaning of sannyasa in general and jignasu in particular? What are the obligations of a Jignasu Sannyasin to guru, family and society?

Before I tell you about sannyasa and the obligations of sannyasa in different forms, one has to know what initiation means. Initiation does not mean admission to a state of yoga or sannyasa. It is not the passport to spiritual life, rather it is a trust between two people and with this trust we gain the ability to see or to experience.

The word in Sanskrit for initiation is *diksha*, which means to be able to see what is behind the veil of maya. *Maya* is definitely not just the cosmic illusion but also the man-made illusion. It is both cosmic and individual in nature but we have to begin with that which we can identify, and that is the individual nature. To be able to experience the real self behind the one which exists in this body is the aim of diksha.

There are various forms of diksha. Yoga diksha and sannyasa diksha are the two predominant ones. Yoga diksha is for people who are treading the path of yoga and again it is usually divided into two: first is the mantra initiation and then comes the name initiation. These are the two common

forms of yoga diksha and the third form of yoga diksha is *sankalpa diksha* – resolution, developing the force of will.

Mantra initiation

Mantra diksha is initiation into the dimension of vibrations and prana so that we can come closer to our inner feeling, so that we can move from the head space into the heart space and experience the vibratory nature, the pranic nature, the feeling aspect of life.

Mantra is a combination of different sounds. Yogis have experienced and believed that different areas of our personality and consciousness can be stimulated with sound. In order to awaken these dormant and hidden areas of our personality, yogis have used mantras. Mantras actually belong to and effect our psychic bodies in the form of sound vibration. A good example of sound vibrations affecting our personality is music. Some forms of music can stimulate the personality and some can lead us into states of introversion. It affects the instinctive levels also. Those animals who have no higher intelligence but have instinctive intelligence are also influenced by the sound vibrations of a note. The yogis, when using mantras, have identified different levels of energy and consciousness manifesting in the body which are affected and transformed by the mantra force.

Some description of the mantra system is given in Kundalini Yoga. If you look at the pictures of the chakras, on each petal you will see different symbols representing different vibrations have been written. So when, for example, we chant the mantra, *om namah shivaya*, we are actually trying to alter the pattern of a particular chakra. *Om* is of course the bija mantra of ajna chakra, *na, ma, shi, va, ya* are sounds belonging to different chakras in our system. So with the chanting of a mantra we are altering the flow of energy in different chakras. The external manifestation or result of such a change in our psychic body is seen in the form of greater mental clarity, perceptivity, increased inner strength, the ability to deal with stress, greater vision and ability to use human creativity. These are some of the external manifestations of the mantras when

performed properly. The internal result of mantra repetition is chakra awakening.

Initiation into spiritual name

Name initiation is for people who have gone one step further in yoga and want to maintain an inner identity, a quality of the higher self. Just as we are recognized by a name, which is our legal name, in the same way our connection with the inner spirit is recognized by identifying the aspect and the quality of spirit which is manifest in life. For example, my name *Niranjan*, is itself a mantra. The intellectual meaning is immaculate, without spot (but don't worry I have a big red spot on my forehead). It represents the nature of spirit with which I can identify, and it has become my aim in life to identify and experience that nature, that quality of myself. Name initiation brings to the surface the connection of an individual with the inner higher nature.

Third is sankalpa diksha and I am not going to tell you about it. I do not want to put the goods on the shelf so you can choose what is necessary for you. This is not a yoga supermarket, rather it is a process of understanding and gaining trust which one attains with the opening of mind and heart in the course of time.

Sannyasa initiation

The second form of diksha is sannyasa diksha. Sannyasa emphasizes two aspects, viveka and vairagya, discrimination and non attachment. They have to be attained through an effort. Sannyasa is a lifestyle where one has to be aware of five things. First is *swadhyaya*, self study, the observation and harmonization of human nature does happen through self study. The second aspect is *sadhana*, perfection in a practice, and in order to attain this there has to be regularity, sincerity and conviction. The third aspect of sannyasa life is *seva*, service, selfless service to humanity at large. The fourth aspect is *satsang*, being in the company of truth. The fifth aspect is *samarpan*, dedication to the will of God, it is in this area that one actually experiences the divine

nature within. These are the five components of sannyasa life which lead to the emergence of discrimination and non attachment in life.

There are different forms of sannyasa for beginners, intermediate and advanced. For people who have overcome their ambitions in life and who have reached a point of stability, Karma Sannyasa is the better way of sannyasa. For those who are stepping into becoming stable in spiritual life there is Jignasu Sannyasa. Jignasu means seeker and in this one has to keep the aims of sannyasa in mind and work to improve oneself. There is a code of conduct for these different levels of sannyasa which has come into force since 1991.

Previously sannyasa was given in order to help people evolve and understand their own reactions in life. In the course of time it was seen that some people who took sannyasa were immature. They did not have the ability to deal with different life situations properly, positively and creatively, rather they became caught up in a sense of their own power and lost the vision of wisdom. Therefore in 1991, after consultation with the acharyas of the sannyasa tradition, we devised a code of conduct which helps people to understand and experience sannyasa in their life. The tradition was of full, or Poorna Sannyasa but Paramahamsaji incorporated the aspect of Karma Sannyasa for those who could live in society, fulfill their obligations and yet maintain a spiritual identity in their life.

When I came into the picture, I incorporated the aspect of Jignasu Sannyasa and totally stopped the initiation into Poorna Sannyasa because Poorna Sannyasa is a very deep thing. I am sure you will appreciate my difficulties too, because I have to deal with two generations of people. I have to deal with the disciples of Paramahamsaji, and I am their guru brother, not their teacher. They think they can take any kind of liberty with me and, because Paramahamsaji is not there to instruct them and guide them, sometimes, in order to teach them something, hard steps have to be taken regardless of one's affection or one's love.

Trust between guru and disciple

Please listen carefully to this because it is the most important point of the whole thing. We feel that we have placed our trust in the teacher but it is the other way round. Why does the guru give us sannyasa in the first place? With what belief? With what thought? Have you ever analyzed that? Never. A guru initiates a person into sannyasa by placing his trust in the aspirant. It is like giving you the degree or diploma before even starting the education. Now which teacher in the world will give you a degree or diploma before you begin your education? Nobody. This is the trust that a guru places in an aspirant, "Look, I'm giving you this degree and I place my trust in you, in the hope that in the course of your life you write your thesis and if not the whole book, definitely at least a few pages." This is the most beautiful trust that we are entrusted with by our teacher and we have never appreciated this at all.

Most people, after taking sannyasa, feel that they have become prophets overnight, that they have attained a very high status and are perfect, but it is not so. Definitely sannyasins are not perfect people. If you expect perfection in sannyasa from those people who have still to work out their samskaras, karmas, ambitions and desires, then there is something wrong in your understanding of the sannyasa system. The sannyasa system is an evolving process. It has to evolve and once one has become comfortable in the lifestyle, one has to become perfect. One has to become adept in the lifestyle of a sannyasin by following the five principles of sannyasa: swadhyaya, sadhana, seva, samarpan and satsang. In this way one can attain the will of discrimination and the power of non attachment.

There are two things which one definitely gains in every kind of attainment: power and wisdom. Our ego pulls our attention to power and ignores wisdom and this is the cause of downfall in the life of every individual, whether they are normal beings or abnormal beings or supernormal beings. In sannyasa one has to identify with wisdom and not with power, and those who identify with power are deluding themselves. If

there is a lack of wisdom there cannot be any kind of progress, growth or attainment.

Therefore, considering all these factors, because they are relevant to our own life, in 1991 we conducted the first sannyasa course and this is the kind of training that was given to the sannyasins who participated in this sannyasa course for one year. These sannyasins, who I proudly call my sannyasins, are now working with a balanced vision, a greater understanding and a greater knowledge of human nature. They are working to help themselves and they are working to help others also. They are practising the five aspects of sannyasa life, and it is necessary.

In fact, when we conducted the six month sannyasa training course for people from overseas Dayaniddhi from the Netherlands attended. You can ask him about how hard a time it was for all of us, because we were being hammered with one thing continuously and constantly – observe yourself. See your reactions, harmonize your reactions, eliminate negativity from your life, eliminate ego, be sincere, be innocent, express your discrimination. These were the things that were emphasized in the training for sannyasa. Since it is not possible for everyone to come to that kind of training, jignasu is a good way to begin. Sannyasa is not a life where you can express your freedom in the market place. Sannyasa is the lifestyle where freedom has to be experienced internally by knowing what freedom means.

The living experience of knowledge and freedom

This knowledge of freedom is not an intellectual concept, rather it is a living experience. Knowledge has to convert itself into a living experience. There is no use in gaining knowledge at all if it cannot be applied. If knowledge cannot become a living experience then don't aspire for it because it will lead us into a greater ignorance than normal. In the Upanishads it has been said that ignorance definitely leads to darkness but knowledge leads to a greater darkness when not applied correctly. Therefore it is our utmost duty to experience. This experience happens by cultivating certain

qualities in life, and for that we have to work. Cultivation of such qualities is the code of conduct for jignasu, karma and poorna sannyasins in the tradition of sannyasa. We can even say that we have to assist in the process of restructuring the tradition of sannyasa by sincerely, without self delusion, making an effort to cultivate the human qualities within us.

As a jignasu one can take the first step, “Okay, I commit myself to myself and I will not delude myself.” This is a commitment that you have to make to yourself, not to anybody else. If you can keep the commitment, you will grow, you will progress. If you cannot keep the commitment it is no skin off my back because I am not the loser, nobody is the loser except you who have failed in front of the different attractions, ambitions and weaknesses of human nature.

During the 1970 three year sannyasa training course, in which I participated for a few months before Paramahamsaji sent me overseas, he mentioned, “I want steel, I don’t want soft marshmallow. I want steel, people who can face the conflicts of life with laughter in their eyes and with a smile on their lips and win all the time.” It is with that vision and that inspiration that we should consider whether we are fit. Don’t, I again say, please don’t ask for sannyasa until you are ready to commit yourself to your own evolution. Don’t ask for sannyasa to become a member of a yoga club or a sannyasa club. Think, and find out if you are ready to commit yourself to your development and growth or not. If you feel that you are ready, deep inside your heart, not through the mind, I request that tonight, those who have applied for jignasu sannyasa do a little bit of heart searching. Don’t go with the force of desire but go with the force of heart and only then will sannyasa be successful in your life.

Discovery of Self

There is a statement in the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali which is describing the method of human interaction and behavior with other people, “Be friendly with those who are happy, be compassionate towards those who are unhappy, be happy for those who are virtuous in nature and don’t be affected by, ignore, the crooked.” I wondered why it was there and in the course of my own understanding I realized that the process of yoga aims to transform the nature of personality.

Exoteric understanding of the three gunas

Normally, when we are thinking about human nature according to the yogic system we encounter three kinds of natures: tamasic, rajasic and sattwic. These three natures have been taken to mean something external. Tamasic has been taken to mean negativity, impurity and stagnation in life. Rajasic has been taken to mean self centered, egoistic awareness. Sattwic has been understood in the form of simplicity and freedom of life expressions. These are the thoughts which we have had about these natures but they also represent the essence of human mind manifesting in the outer dimension. If these gunas represent the essence of human nature, then what do they mean in reality? Because normally an essence means the quality of a particular state which is the source of manifestation of actions.

When these qualities manifest in the external world and are influenced by our ego experiences, then the definition of

these qualities changes. Ego expressions are forces of energy, subtle energy which interacts with the environment, with situations and conditions. When this ego energy encounters a particular condition it reacts and behaves in a certain way. The coloring of ego expression which happens in our life is seen as the manifestation of the gunas.

Esoteric understanding of the three gunas

Gunas have a deeper meaning than the normal negativity and positivity. The *tamasic*, which normally means stagnation and lethargy, in its deeper meaning means the state in which we are fixed. This fixation and this conditioning is of the entire being. When we find that there is some sort of change happening within us, over which we have no control and of which we have no concept, then there is a resistance to that change. There is rejection. That is the external form but the internal form is awareness of stability in life. Stability in life is the essence of the tamasic nature. When this stability is mixed with our ambitions and ego, then the quality changes, insecurities, fears and aggression manifests, and there is a very deep rejection of things which we believe and feel will change us.

However the tamasic nature represents a process of transformation too. In order to stabilize in one particular state of being, in order to experience a better state of our being, we have to work. The work creates a change within, so the two aspects of stability and transformation go hand in hand. Stability is the result of an effort which has transformed the nature of our inner personality.

Tamas conditioned by ego manifests as fixation; its pure essence is attainment

Tamas means stagnation, fixation. That is the outer meaning. Stagnation and fixation means a conditioned state of being. In the deeper meaning tamas means stability. This stability is combined with harmony. Yoga has seen tamas as having two aspects, that of transformation and that of attainment. In the process of transformation there

is change. In attainment there is harmony and stability. The deeper meaning of tamas is that harmony and stability in which a new condition is experienced, where a new image is seen on the canvas.

Let us imagine that there is a canvas in the room and we have to paint it. The original color of the canvas is white. If we leave that canvas white, that is the tamasic nature. When we begin to paint, if we are not professionals, we create a mess on the canvas. We begin to think, “Look, it was such a beautiful white canvas and I have messed it up.” But an artist who is capable of having the vision of a painting will just throw some paints on the canvas and make a beautiful image out of it which expresses inner beauty. This experience of inner beauty, which is also conditioned but is a better condition, is also a tamasic state. Tamas means experiencing the stability in a particular state of life.

Rajas conditioned by ego manifests as movement; its pure essence is continuation

Rajas has meant ego centered awareness where externally the senses are caught up in movement towards one's own ambitions; the deeper meaning of rajas is a process of continuation. A person walking on a road can be considered to be conducting a rajasic activity, where there is movement, of body, emotions and mind. The same person, when standing at one place, admiring the beauty of that place, is representing tamas, stability, fixation on a point. In both these stages the personality, the senses and the mental faculties, express themselves in a specific way. Expressions of rajas and tamas take place under the influence of ambitions and ego but there is a third state of life, nature of life, quality of life, which is sattwa.

Sattwa is the pure essence; it is experienced through harmony of tamas and rajas

Sattwa represents the pure, harmonious nature of the self and life. The aim of yoga, through its various processes of meditations and higher yogas, is to attain the sattwic nature.

Yoga says that normally human beings oscillate between the tamasic and the rajasic natures, and very rarely in life does one experience the sattwic nature. That purity is an inner experience which cannot be described. The experience of purity is a state of attainment and it has to be achieved by the aspirants of yoga. But what kind of knowledge does one get? What kind of experience does one get? It cannot be described. How can one define light? As something bright, something luminous? How can one define sweetness? As something which gives a pleasant sensation to the tongue? How can one define the taste of water? And water definitely has a taste, not only fruit drinks or coca-cola. If you want to know the taste of water, go into a desert for a few days without water, then try to drink it. The taste of that water will be the most unique taste which you will ever experience in your life.

There is an essence to everything that we do in life but we have to discover that essence. In order to discover that essence we have to go beyond the manifest consciousness. This is not difficult, it is possible for those who try but we have to follow a system. The final experience which one gets is a very personal experience but at the same time it gives an understanding of the universal nature.

There have been various statements in the different scriptures of the world. It has been said, "Become the light in order to see the light and experience the light." "Do to others what you would do to yourself." "In order to radiate light become a mirror that reflects the light." Many choices have been given but these concepts and ideas all represent a process of effort and transcendence and it is in this direction that yoga eventually moves.

This journey to the source is mapped in Raja Yoga

If we look into the principles of Raja Yoga we find that the entire system of yoga is not only physical, not only spiritual but is a process of inner awareness and discovery. In fact it is not only a process of inner awareness and discovery but also of elimination, transformation and harmony. Elimination of impurities, toxins and negativity from within the mind

is a spontaneous and natural process but we have blocked it. Normally we are so stressed and tense under our routine that we never actually get enough time to sit down quietly for a few moments to try to eliminate the toxins which are accumulated within us. You have to find time to go to the toilet no matter how busy you are. You have to find at least two or three minutes time if you are in a hurry, and you can even spend half an hour in the toilet reading a book and enjoying your peace and quiet. The same principle has to apply with the mind too. In solitude, you have to spend a few moments of time, according to the amount of space that you can make for yourself in your own life. You have to provide that time.

First eliminate negativity

The process of elimination is taught in the system of Raja Yoga. When Raja Yoga speaks of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana it is implying that by these practices you can eliminate negativity from the mind, awaken the relaxed nature of mind, the sattwa nature, and experience creativity. It is in this light that you have to understand the systems and practices of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana.

Dhyana or meditation is a state of deep identification with the inner being but in order to identify with the deep inner being one has to be natural. In order to experience the state of meditation one cannot impose any form of condition upon oneself, and therefore meditation is something that nobody can practise. Meditation is something which represents a state of mind.

Practise for transformation

What we can practise is concentration. What we can practise is the development of our awareness. What we can practise is learning how to channel our internal reactions and in this way experience the meditative state. Therefore Sage Patanjali has put dhyana meditation as the third stage in the process of handling the mind. In the first stage of handling the mind he has described pratyahara techniques.

In order to understand mind we should try to understand it from the yogic point of view. According to yoga there are four areas of mind. One area is *buddhi*, or intellect, which is manifesting in the outer dimension. Another area is *manas* which is rationality manifesting in the world of senses. The third aspect is *chitta*, the ability to observe and channel one's actions and reactions. The fourth is *ahamkara*, ego awareness, self oriented awareness.

Now our emotions, feelings and all the other subtle manifestations fall into these four categories. There are emotions which are charged and guided by *ahamkara* or by *buddhi*. There are emotions which are directed and guided by the rationality of *manas*. There are emotions, feelings and sensations which are guided and directed by the aspect of *chitta*. This holds in both the subconscious and unconscious levels. The concept of mind is very broad in yoga – this could have been our subject for a month in order to understand the completeness and totality of the mental expressions, but we don't have a month, we only have a few hours so I will try to be brief.

Initially observe through pratyahara

In the process of pratyahara we are made to observe these various conditions of our inner self. Normally people think that if we close our eyes and withdraw ourselves from the outer world then we immediately move into states of meditation. Definitely this happens but before you actually move into the meditative state the quality or dimension of awareness has to increase and fill up the whole mental frame. Awareness, filling the entire dimension of mind, is the aim of pratyahara.

Normally our awareness is directed to one specific point and even the direction of such awareness is unconscious. You are listening to me but at the same time there are many other impressions which are being received by you. You are not aware of them unless something happens which diverts your attention and makes you aware of another activity. We are sitting and moving our bodies but we are not aware of the

physical movements until something happens which brings our mind to the movement of the body and makes us aware.

So normally we have limited the field of awareness, our awareness is not equally distributed in all our senses and mental faculties. In pratyahara one aims to distribute the awareness evenly in all areas of human expression. In pratyahara one has to follow a system of internalization. Some of us are familiar with the practices of, for example, yoga nidra, antar mouna or ajapa japa. In these practices we can see what actually happens in pratyahara.

Let us take the example of antar mouna. There are seven stages in this practice. In the first stage we become aware of the sensory experiences. We are not withdrawing ourselves from the sensory experiences, rather we are extending our awareness into the sensory experiences and observing what is taking place in that level of sensorial interaction with the self.

Gradually, in the subsequent stages, we begin to move inwards. First we become aware of the external activities of the senses, we acknowledge the sounds, the smells, the body sensations, the body conditions, then we move our attention from the body and fix it on the mind. We choose one activity of the mind, which in antar mouna is witnessing the thought process, and initially we are simply observing the thoughts that come to the surface. Later on we choose a thought, follow that train of thoughts to its source and then eventually gain the ability to stop the thoughts at will. Then we pick up another activity of mind, whether it be an emotion or a desire. We observe it and go to the source of it. We see which component of our inner nature is stimulating that particular desire or emotion or thought.

In this way we discover the areas of mind which influence our attitudes and interactions and harmonize them, then we move into the practice of dharana. So what happens in pratyahara? First there is an extension of the senses. In the second stage there is watching the reaction of the self and the senses. In the third stage we internalize our awareness. In the fourth stage we observe the inner reactions. In the fifth stage we harmonize the inner reactions. In the sixth

stage of pratyahara we move into the stage of concentration, dharana, fixation of the mind. So you can see how important the practices of pratyahara are in order to give one knowledge of what is happening inside.

Simple observation is used in pratyahara. Identification with the other aspects of our personality is also accepted in pratyahara, and after gaining a full understanding of the manifest consciousness, after filling the entire mental dimension with the light of awareness, we move into dharana.

Continue through dharana

In dharana there is natural expression of our inner being. It is this natural expression which focuses our personalities at one particular point where expansion of consciousness and awakening of energy is experienced. The aim of dharana is to experience the expansion and the development of consciousness, and the awakening of the energies within.

Dharana is translated and defined as the state of concentration. Fine. But in order to experience that state of deep intense concentration you have to adopt a process again. Let us say dharana means hitting the bull's-eye. One needs to have the bow and the arrows to hit it. One needs to put the arrow to the string of the bow and pull it. Just by thinking that I have hit the bull's-eye one can never hit the bull's-eye. The secret of hitting the bull's-eye in dharana is being natural. I'll tell you a story.

This is the story of one famous and great Sufi saint who is known practically all over the world by the name of Mullah Nasruddin. One day, a few centuries ago, he was with his disciples and decided to visit the fair. While they were visiting they came across a contest of archery. In this contest each participant was given three arrows and they had to hit the bull's-eye which was about thirty meters away. Everyone voted that their Mullah should enter the archery contest and there was a nice prize for the winner – a model of a windmill.

Mullah Nasruddin was fired up by the enthusiasm of his followers and he didn't look to the left, he didn't look

to the right, he just picked up one arrow and let it fly, but he missed his mark. He had a very clever disciple who immediately came to the rescue of his guru and said, "You who do not do anything without a reason, please tell us why did you shoot the arrow away from the target?" The Mullah internally blessed his disciple for saving him and said, "The man who shot the arrow was not me. The man who shot the arrow was an overconfident person who thinks he can achieve anything in life, is not able to focus his attention and generally misses the mark."

He picked up the second arrow but this time he was a bit more careful, so as not to lose face again. This time he checked his body stance, walked up to the target, measuring each step, and checked the direction and velocity of the wind. He did some calculations on a piece of paper in relation to distance, wind velocity and strength, and when he was happy with his computer analysis, he let fly the arrow again. This time, because he was so careful, the arrow went twenty meters and then went down.

There was giggling in the crowd and again this disciple came to his rescue and said, "Master, please explain to us why, despite all the calculations you did, your arrow did not hit the bull's-eye." The Mullah again blessed his disciple a thousand times and said, "That was not me who shot the arrow, it was a person who was under confident and who took every precaution because he did not want to fail, but in that precaution he did not use his full ability. He lost his mental balance and such people can never attain the goal. They usually go half way and then fall down."

This time, the Mullah picked up the third arrow, he said, "To hell with all my lectures", and just let fly the arrow. The arrow went straight into the bull's-eye and very proudly the Mullah put down his bow and, with the air of an accomplished person, began to walk away with his windmill. Suddenly the people realized he had not told them who the third person was. They called out to him and said, "Please tell us who was the third person who shot the arrow?" The Mullah looked back at them and said, "That was me!"

So, the moral of the story is, be natural and if you can accept yourself as you are, if you can channel your forces as you are, then you are bound to hit the bull's-eye. This is the process of dharana, and after that we come to the state of dhyana meditation.

Dhyana is experiencing harmony for yourself

In meditation there is the experience of reality. In meditation there is no confusion at all and what one experiences in meditation is only known by oneself. I won't make the subject very serious, I will tell you the story of my great grandfather.

My great grandfather lived many years ago, before I was born, and he was a medical student. In those days the knowledge of medicine was not evolved like it is today. While he was an unmarried student, suddenly the professor of medicine posed a question to the class, "What is the taste of cyanide poison?" The class had no choice except to experiment on themselves. Everyone refused, but my great grandfather, for the sake of science, decided to find out the taste of cyanide. He was not married then. He sat down in his room with a glass of cyanide in one hand, paper and pen in the other, and he quickly drank the cyanide, wrote something on the paper and kaput.

People came later on to see why he had sacrificed himself for the sake of science and what conclusions he had reached about the taste of cyanide. There was a big crowd of scientists, professors and medical students standing around his desk where he was kaput and they looked at the piece of paper which contained the single letter, 'S'.

One professor said, "I can tell you what this 'S' stands for, 'S' stands for sweet and therefore the taste of cyanide is sweet." Another professor said, "No, I think you are wrong, 'S' stands for salty and the taste of cyanide is not sweet, it is salty!" The third eminent scientist of the country said, "Both of you are wrong, 'S' represents sour, it is neither sweet nor salty." While this discussion was going on my great grandfather, who was dead, lifted his head and said, "Forget it, only I know the taste."

That is the state of meditation. You and I, we can sit here talking about it for as long as we want but the real state of meditation is that of fusion. It is the state of fusion with harmony and with consciousness, and in this altered state of consciousness divine qualities manifest.

Meditation is definitely a state of external death. Death in the sense that there is no identification with the world of name, form and object, there is no suffering because of that intimate identification. There is an awareness which has lifted itself beyond the plain of pain and pleasure. Equanimity is experienced on all levels and that equanimity is the source of peace, joy and the experience of truth in life, where the influences of time, space and object do not alter the human consciousness.

This dhyana is sattwa

It is the state, not of fluctuation of consciousness but of continuity of consciousness. In this continuity of consciousness one experiences the real qualities of life, the sattwic qualities of life. The quality of sattwa manifests externally in the forms of love, affection, compassion and devotion which are not conditioned in any way, which are not influenced in any way by the existing circumstances and situations of the world. That expression is known later on as the expression of a realized being.

The deepening of that state is known as *samadhi* where one becomes the universe, where one identifies with every human being as if they were one's own people, where the true quality of friendship manifests, where understanding manifests, where acceptance manifests and there is no conflict. There is acceptance of other people according to their level of evolution. There is no rejection of anyone. Now, we may reject someone if we don't like them. If we don't like their behavior or their attitude or lifestyle or thoughts, we reject them. We create a very strong wall which does not allow the process of acceptance to take place. But at this stage of meditation there is understanding and there is acceptance. There is understanding of other people's limitations and natures.

It is here that friendship is expressed towards those who are happy and content and it is here that compassion, affection and love is expressed for those who are in need of help and who are suffering. It is here that joy is expressed for those who are virtuous in nature. It is here that acceptance also takes place, in the spirit of friendship and understanding of those who are crooked. We know their limitations, we know their nature, we ignore their negative nature and we accept their positive nature and their contribution. These are the symptoms of a person who lives in yoga.

Once I asked Paramahamsaji, “What do you see in people?” He said, “I try to see their good qualities, even if the worst person in the world comes to me with millions of defects. If I can see one good quality hidden under the million defects then I work to bring out that hidden positive quality by ignoring and bypassing the million defects which he projects on me.”

Can we be like that? This is what we must aspire for in yoga if we are to live in the spirit of yoga. Therefore let us begin with developing some qualities in life, apart from doing the normal practices of asana, pranayama, this and that. Understanding, friendship, forgiveness, support, compassion; let these five become our stepping stones into the discovery of the self.

Sankalpa Diksha

Our time together is coming to a close so it is appropriate for us all to take a sankalpa. A *sankalpa* means a resolution and this resolution should be that we must learn to take care of the entirety of our personality. There is a story which has actually been the theme of my visit in Europe and I would like to share the message of this story with you.

In a farmhouse, a mother and child lived together. The mother loved the many plants which she had in the house and gardens and her whole life revolved around taking care of those plants. One day she had to leave the farm for a few days to attend to some work, and she entrusted the care of the plants to her son. When she came back about a week later, she found that all her plants were looking a bit sick, wilted and droopy.

She asked her small son if he had looked after them and he said he had looked after them to the best of his ability, so she asked him how he had looked after them. He said, “I used to go round with a dusting cloth in my hand wiping out each and every speck of dust from every leaf, from every petal, from every fruit. After that I would polish the trunks and the branches and if I found any insects crawling around anywhere I would remove them.” His mother asked the question, “Did you water the plants?” And the son said, “That I forgot.”

Seeing and caring for the deeper reality

This is a true story of a person and it is also true of our life. What does this tree represent in our life? The tree represents

the body which is the medium of expression in this worldly plane, the body with all its faculties of action and senses. The flowers and the fruits represent the results of the actions of the senses and the body. This is the part of the self with which we identify and which is above the surface. We go around with a dusting cloth in the form of a towel to wash ourselves, we scrub ourselves with soap, we go around with polish and we remove the insects which attack us in the form of viruses and bacteria with the help of medications.

Although we try to maintain the health of the tree which is above ground, very rarely do we actually water the roots which are underground and from which we derive our nourishment, our strength. In the absence of water our whole life becomes weak. So this resolution which we have to take is that we will take care of our whole tree, not only the part which grows above ground but also the part that spreads underground.

The part which spreads underground, from which we derive our strength and nourishment can be tapped with the practices of yoga. The roots of our life are our deeper inner nature and the experience of spirit. The caring aspect of life should and will happen when we are able to incorporate a balanced yogic structure in our life. It is with this awareness that we must go deeper into the practices and understanding of yoga, and only then can we find peace within.

There is a statement of Paramahamsaji's which I always remember and keep very close to my heart, "There is no noise in the world and there is no peace in the mountains." There is no peace in isolation and there is no disturbance in a noisy situation, they both exist within us. If one is not at peace with oneself then even in the most remote corner of the world one will not attain peace. If one is at peace with oneself then even in the middle of the market one would be at total peace. Peace is something which we all want desperately in our life. We search for peace around us but we have never tried to discover the cause of that disturbance which does not allow us to experience peace.

One must first know what is the cause of a disturbance and when one knows the cause it is very easy to find a solution and to attain peace. Therefore it is my request and suggestion to all of you that you find the cause, and then you will find the solution to a problem. Don't look for simple solutions in life. To be frank there are none, there are only intelligent choices. One has to make that choice which will be conducive to one's own development, and it should also be conducive in helping, supporting and assisting others. That is the only way to change oneself from deep inside.

Let Thy will be done

No matter what one does there should also be the awareness of a higher will. The attitude of experiencing that higher will is, "Let Thy will be done". This is a very important aspect of our life. Please don't misunderstand me, I am not trying to indoctrinate you in any way, but the realities of life have to be understood. If we wish to close our eyes and not see the world and reality then it is our choice but if we can open them and see the beauty of the environment, then we are at peace. In this context it is also necessary to see the force which guides our life, the force that nourishes the roots of the tree. Roots by themselves cannot sustain a tree. They derive nutrients from the ground around them. In the same way we derive nutrients from another source and people have given names to this source. I don't think we should concern ourselves with the different names of the source but definitely we should be aware that we derive strength, inspiration and force from the source. Only then can we derive true contentment in life.

There is a beautiful integration of the human faculties. The faculties of body merge with those of mind, those of mind merge with those of spirit, and then we become whole, complete, and that is the aim of human life. When we begin to experience this completeness in our life the actions change, the attitudes change, sensitivity changes.

In the tradition of yoga four kinds of effort have been described. The first kind of effort is *artha* to attain security,

both internal and external. Just as one requires external security in order to survive, one also needs internal security. When one experiences deep inner security the external limitations of life have no meaning, there is no struggle, only flowing in life; and one has to find that deep inner security within. Whether one finds it through the practices of yoga or through meditation is irrelevant but effort has to be made to go in the direction of greater understanding and acceptance.

The second effort is for the fulfillment of desires, *kama*. Desires are the motivating force which guide us in our life, they guide our actions and behaviors. These desires are colored by the gunas. Tamasic, rajasic and sattwic desires lead to different forms of action. Becoming aware of a desire and its quality, making an effort to experience the pure force of the desire, and gaining the ability to harmonize our attitudes, behavior and actions can be attained through Karma Yoga combined with the practices of Jnana Yoga and meditation.

The third effort that we need to achieve in our life is towards dharma. *Dharma* means commitment, duty towards life in its entirety: in relation to an individual, in relation to society and in relation to the world. Dharma is being aware of the contribution which we can make to ourselves, to society and to the world and definitely, as life members of the club of humanity we have a lot to contribute.

The fourth effort which we need to make in life is to attain the inner freedom which is known as *moksha*. By recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of our nature, the ambitions that drive us, and the needs which exist in our life, we can come to an understanding of ourselves. Through this understanding we can attain inner freedom and a complete picture of life.

So it is this sankalpa which we should take at the time of concluding our program. Definitely this is not the end of our meeting, rather it is the beginning of our meeting, we have just completed the first part. We will end this session with an international joke which tells you of the different mentalities I meet during travel around the world.

In the department of zoology in one university, the professor asked the students to write an essay on an elephant. All the different people wrote their essay. The English man gave his essay the title, “How to Hunt Elephants”, the American’s was, “How to Develop Bigger and Better Elephants”, the Japanese gave the title, “The Microchip Elephant”, the German gave, “A Biological Survey of an Elephant”, the French, “Lovelifeness of an Elephant”, the Indian title was, “Elephants, the Great Indian Problem”. So you can imagine how many ways it was described. In the same way, describing yoga through different languages and cultural mediums is my effort but let us hope we have come to understand yoga in a better way.

There is a beautiful communication in the *Ramayana* between Sri Rama and Hanuman. People ask Hanuman what is his relationship with Sri Rama and Hanuman says, “Physically, externally, I am his humble servant. Internally I am his intimate friend. Spiritually, we are one.” That applies in our life too. Externally we are disciples of a guru, internally we are friends and spiritually we are all one.

France



Introduction to Laya Yoga

First we will discuss the place of Laya Yoga in the yogic system and tradition, then we will discuss the meaning of Laya Yoga and then the theory of Laya Yoga and its practices. We should understand the meaning and place of this yoga properly. Unless we are familiar with the theory we shall neither be able to appreciate nor experience the deeper aspects of laya.

When we come to the system of yoga, initially we are exposed to the physical aspect in the form of asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha. As we go deeper into our practice we come to the level of purificatory practices which help remove toxins and other impurities from the body. Then eventually we come to the practices of Raja Yoga. Generally this is how we move from one system to the next.

Inner discipline

If we study the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, in the very first sutra we come across his statement that yoga is a form of inner discipline. The result of inner discipline is the control of the modifications of the mind which ultimately leads to being aware of our inner nature. This is the content of the three sutras at the beginning of Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*.

Atha yoga anushasanam means yoga is a form of discipline. This discipline has to be acquired at the physical, subtle and causal level. Discipline does not mean an imposed restriction, rather it is a state of harmonious expression of the faculties of the gross, subtle and causal dimensions.

The koshas

Yoga has seen the human personality in the form of the koshas which begin from the annamaya kosha, the dimension of matter, and go up to the anandamaya kosha, the dimension of bliss. Between the physical dimension and the high, blissful, spiritual dimension there are three other ones which are of mind, energy and knowledge. All these five dimensions have to be harmonized so that a proper unfoldment of the human personality can take place and the entire system of yoga is geared to bring this level of perfection into our life.

Annamaya kosha is managed by the practices of asana and pranayama. We work on our annamaya dimension with asana and pranayama and remove the imbalances from this dimension which are the cause of physical imbalance, illnesses. After working on the annamaya kosha with the help of Hatha Yoga, we move into the manomaya dimension and work there with the help of Raja Yoga practices. In the Raja Yoga system we see a gradation of yoga in eight stages in the form of yama, niyama, passive asana and pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

After finding a balance in the mental structure, in the areas of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, we begin to gradually work with the dimension of energy which is known as the pranamaya kosha. In order to harmonize the energy dimension, to awaken the pranic forces and awaken the inherent human potential, which is also recognized by the name kundalini, we use the practices of Mantra, Kriya and Kundalini Yoga.

Afterwards, when we move from the pranamaya dimension to the vijñanamaya kosha, which is the dimension of consciousness, we use the practices of Laya Yoga. So in this system we find that Laya Yoga deals with the fourth aspect of our multi-dimensional existence. We see a progression from asana to the practices of Laya Yoga, and this is a progression from the dimension of matter to the dimension of consciousness.

Importance of the correct sequence

One thing which I should definitely mention here is that yoga overemphasizes the need to perfect the stages at the beginning before moving on to the next higher stage. If we move through the initial stages and perfect each level as we go then the process of growth is very natural and spontaneous. If we jump by ignoring the basics, then we are playing with forces and areas of nature and consciousness over which we have no control and different forms or stages of lunacy can be experienced. The experience of lunacy is not the aim of yoga but because we always tend to go for the highest experience from the initial stage, we find that we come to a point and then there is a barrier to movement. This has to be avoided, and therefore it is necessary that we perfect the basics of yoga and move from one level of experience to another gradually.

Moving from annamaya to the manomaya dimension has to be a very spontaneous process. Yoga recognizes that there is a link between the conditions and states of the body and the mind. The physical harmony which we experience in the body, the balance in the nervous system, in the internal organs and in the brain, is bound to create a corresponding change in the mind. When we throw a storm into a still state of being a ripple effect is created in all the five levels of human nature. As we can see, even in water, the ripples which move further away from the source lose their intensity. The movement becomes more subtle. Similarly, the effect in the final stage is very subtle. The stronger effect is felt on the body, in the annamaya kosha, the subtle effect is felt in the anandamaya kosha, but there is a continuous link, a movement which is seen from the physical to the spiritual. So the overemphasis on perfecting the basics is there in yoga in order to experience the deeper, inner consciousness.

According to these yogic principles, meditation is not as important as the harmonization of the body. After the body is harmonized you then move into different areas of the manifest mind. Mind is the extension of consciousness which interacts with the world of the senses, and we have to move from the

visible part of the mind to the invisible. Outside the wind is blowing. Inside the room is the same air but we do not feel the force of it. It is the same air, but because of the confines of the room the intensity of flow is not felt. The same applies with consciousness and mind. Consciousness is the air which flows outside the room and it has its own nature and flow. The mind, which is confined in the manifest dimension, is like the air in this room.

We do not have the natural ability to experience the unknown, and if we try to experience the unknown it is always translated by the rational mind. We tend to forget that the rational mind is only one attribute of the manifest mind, and it does not have the ability to grasp the bigger area of consciousness. Just as the strength of the arm is much greater than the strength of one finger, our ability to grasp the greater force is lacking in normal life.

Pratyahara, dharana and dhyana

According to the theory of yoga, the ability of the rational mind has to be transformed by a process of observation so that we can know and feel what is happening in the broader range of consciousness. It is for this reason that yogis have told you that you should go through the process of pratyahara. After perfecting the level of pratyahara, move into dharana, after perfecting dharana move into the meditative state where we can work with the dimension of energy.

Those who are familiar with the practices of *pratyahara* will appreciate that in the initial stages we are becoming aware of different mental activities. This takes place in *antar mouna* in the form of thought observation, breath observation, observing the images which come up in the mind, and recognizing the sensory experiences. Slowly, by seeing the interaction of the external mind, we focus the faculties of mind so that mental dissipations become less, then we move into the practices of dharana.

In *dharana* one pointed attention or awareness is observed. Some practises of dharana with which we are familiar are the final stage of *chidakasha dharana* and

trataka. By the time one comes to the level of dharana one must have control over the mental fluctuations. One should have the ability to channel and guide the expressions of emotions, and the expressions of behavior. Whatever the interaction that happens with the world in relation to mind, intellect and ego, it should be done with awareness. The mental environment has to be under one's control. Then we move into dhyana.

Dhyana happens at various dimensions. Dhyana is not closing the eyes and withdrawing oneself from the world. Rather it is awakening the faculties of prana and combining the awakened faculties of prana with consciousness. So dhyana can take different forms here. The meaning of the word *dhyana* is not meditation, it is inner awakening. This inner awakening is to be seen with the awakening of the chakras which happens when we become aware of the energy. The chakras represent centers of dormant energy within the human personality.

Pranamaya kosha

Energy is more subtle than the manifest mind. Energy is the controlling or the guiding agent of the manifest mind and energy is a non-rational activity. Mental activities can be rational but energy has to be experienced. Unfortunately people in the world have lost the ability to feel. We live in the space of the head and the space of the head is definitely the space of intellect. The space of the heart is the space of feeling and we lack this natural ability to feel. If we try to feel anything it is a conditioned awareness which has a link with our intellect and which makes us have certain expectations and look for certain results.

Pure feelings are never experienced by us, yet pure feelings represent the forces which control the manifest and the unmanifest world. There is air in the room but we cannot feel it. There is prana in the body but we cannot feel it until and unless something happens. If we wave paper in front of ourselves then we feel the wind. If we wave an emotion internally, then we feel the expression of energy.

Fear is a manifestation of energy. Anger is a manifestation of energy. Hatred is a manifestation of energy over which there is no control by any logic. If there is control by logic then it is not an emotion. If you can control your anger through logic you will never feel anger. If you can control hatred or jealousy through logic then you will not experience the intensity of hatred and jealousy. Any manifestation which happens at the level of no mind is an experience of energy.

Chakras

Prana means different things in different contexts but in general this pranic energy, when related to an external environment, to a particular frame of mind, to a particular type of behavior or to a particular sensory experience, takes a different form in the energy structure. These energy structures are represented in the form of chakras.

In each chakra there is also a predominant element. The purity of energy has been converted in different chakras. Conversion of energy at each level is one element. Chakras are like transformers. The light in this room is connected to 220 volts, say that is the swadhisthana intensity. Mooladhara has 110 volts, 440 is manipura intensity – and you know different functions happen with different voltages. If you plug a machine which is 220 volts into a 440 outlet it is going to blow up. So these transformers are step-down transformers of the high voltage in sahasrara.

It is these chakras which are awakened in dhyana. In Kriya Yoga the emphasis is on dhyana. Although they may be physical in nature, in each practice of Kriya Yoga, mind has to experience the stage of dhyana. If you try to experience pratyahara in Kriya Yoga your practice will be unsuccessful. In order to have the sensitivity to experience the changes that happen in Kriya Yoga one needs to have a very focused mental awareness. If there is dissipation in the initial stages of Kriya Yoga, we shall not be able to feel the energy activity.

Just to give you an example, the first practice of Kriya Yoga is *vipareeta karani mudra*. It is a practice which we do in our normal asana session, but what makes the vipareet

karani in Kriya Yoga different? There is greater intensity of concentration and this makes us aware of subtle energy movement. Dhyana is a very heightened state of perception, unadulterated by the fluctuations of the senses, and in the state of dhyana we awaken the chakras. As these energy centers progressively awaken in our personality corresponding changes happen in the field of consciousness. And this awakening of consciousness is different from the normal experience of mind.

Vijnanamaya kosha and Laya Yoga

After awakening the prana in pranamaya kosha we have to manage changes of our consciousness. So we move from the awakening of chakras and kundalini into the dimension of consciousness – vijnanamaya kosha. Laya Yoga is the series of practices of meditation which manages the changes in the dimension of consciousness which is being awakened along with the different energy manifestations. This is the place of Laya Yoga in the yogic structure.

Now, the meaning of Laya Yoga. *Laya* means dissolution. When we combine the word *yoga* it means dissolution with harmony. Dissolution or dissolving different stages of mind and consciousness without creating imbalance. That is the meaning of *Laya Yoga*. The basic theory is that each experience of the lower consciousness merges with the higher experience.

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Dharana on the Pillar of Light

Remain seated comfortably for some time.

Maintain the eyes closed. If you need to adjust your body posture you can do so now.

Be comfortable. Become aware of your body.

Awareness of the body internally. Observe the physical condition for a few moments.

Know the state of the body and make sure that you are physically comfortable. There should not be any tension in the body. Also

maintain the mental alertness. The mind should be active, alert, but not distracted or dissipated.

Become actively aware of the condition of your body. During the practice you are free to move the body but any movement which you make should be done quietly. During the practise maintain the eyes closed.

Become aware of the stillness and silence within the body. Complete awareness of space inside the body. The whole body is filled with the experience of space.

Have an image of the body in the form of an empty shell, with an outer covering of skin only. Inside the skin is total emptiness. Only space exists within the body. The entire awareness should observe the space inside the body.

In the center of the body, in the space, visualize a pillar of light. One pillar of light. This pillar of light extends from the bottom of the body to the crown of the head.

Develop the experience of a pillar of light in the space of the body, extending from the base of the body to the crown of the head.

Move along this pillar with the help of the natural breath. At the time of inhalation move from the bottom of the pillar to the crown of the head, and with the exhalation move the awareness from the top to the bottom.

Be aware of the space. Observe the pillar of light in the inner space. With the normal breath, move up and down the pillar. Feel a gentle constriction in the throat and with the gentle constriction the sound of the breath changes. The sound is of slow and deep breathing. The sound is of the ujjayi breath. Gently turn the tongue back in the mouth. The back of the tongue touches the upper palate. The tip of the tongue is facing back down towards the throat. There is a gentle contraction of the throat muscles and the breath which flows up and down the pillar of light creates a gentle hissing sound. Observe the sound of the ujjayi breath in khechari mudra.

Remain aware of the experience of space in the body. Observe and maintain the awareness of the pillar of light. Be aware of the sound of the ujjayi breath. With the help of the ujjayi sound the consciousness moves up and down.

When the tongue gets tired of the practice of khechari then gently relax the tongue but continue with the gentle and soothing practice of deep ujjayi breathing. When the tongue is rested then again practise khechari.

The movement of breath along the pillar of light is in the area between the base of the pillar and the back of the throat. The movement and experience of consciousness along the pillar of light is in the range of mooladhara and vishuddhi.

Observe the movement of awareness along the luminous pillar. Along with the practice of ujjayi breath go on practising khechari in a relaxed manner.

Now breathe normally. Become aware of the physical body. Become aware of the external sounds. Slowly and gently bring the hands together. Rub the palms together. Place the palms on top of the eyes and then slowly open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat

There are some practices which we will do in parts so that you will not fall asleep. In fact even the ability to control sleep is necessary. It is normal that when we close the eyes the senses are introverted and in the state of introversion there is no self control. One is pulled down by the condition and state of the mind and a disconnection of mind from the senses and awareness takes place. When this disconnection happens then sleep comes.

One of the ways to see who can practice proper meditation is to make people sit for one hour in total sensory disconnection and see if they sleep or not. If they sleep then it will be difficult to practise meditation. They will have to start again from the basics. Well, we are not going to do that sort of test here. We are choosing the easy way out by breaking up the practices in sections of twenty minutes. If you sleep within the twenty minutes then there is no hope.

Twenty eight stages of consciousness

Now to return to Laya Yoga. Dissolution has to begin with an awareness of instinctual consciousness. Just to explain to you the theory of Laya Yoga, the yogic tradition speaks of twenty

eight stages of consciousness and we are right now at the fifteenth state of consciousness. The levels of consciousness from the fifteenth to the twenty first are experienced with the awakening of the chakras. This dimension of chakras represents the normal human consciousness.

Below them are fourteen other stages and these levels have been given the different names of *patala* and *naraka*. The *patala* level of consciousness is active and is known as instinctive consciousness. The *patala* level of consciousness is an instinctive manifestation of individuality in life. Below the *patala* level is the *naraka* level where the level of consciousness is dormant and crude, where the potentiality of consciousness is in the seed form. It is dormant, not awakened, yet aware that it has potential.

We have come to this human level of consciousness from these first two dimensions. In extreme tamasic states we experience the *naraka* consciousness. In extreme rajasic states we experience the *patala* state, the instinctive consciousness where the instincts are very powerful and they begin to govern the entire expression of human nature.

In the human dimension we experience different levels of consciousness which are called chakras in yogic terminology. Beyond this level of chakras, the human consciousness, exists another dimension of experience. In yogic terminology these higher states of consciousness are known as *lokas*. The chakras represent a manifestation of energy where the energy is active and consciousness is passive. In the *lokas* the consciousness is represented, and at that level consciousness is active and energy is passive.

In the practices of Laya Yoga we move from the level of chakras to the level of *lokas*. It is hoped that with the other techniques of yoga one can harmonize the awakening of energy at the chakra level. We then move to the *loka* level which is the experience of a different consciousness where the knowledge and experience of consciousness is predominant and energy is a supportive factor for that experience.

Normally, at the chakra level, consciousness is the support for understanding the energy experience. So the roles change

from chakras to lokas. When we study the chakras, we also begin to understand that along with the awakening of energy at different centers, a change in the pattern of consciousness is experienced. But, it has been seen that in the practices of Kriya or Kundalini Yoga we are made more aware of the pranamaya kosha; we concentrate more on energy experience and less on the experience of altered consciousness.

Instincts and the first stage of Laya Yoga

It is believed that with the awakening of prana at different chakras, the corresponding experience of consciousness also awakens. Then the instincts related to that part of consciousness become active.

Just to give you an example, yoga speaks of four different instinctive states of consciousness. The first is the sexual instinct, the second is fear, the third is craving, wanting, desiring and the fourth is sleep. When the mooladhara chakra awakens we begin to experience the sexual energy in the form of a very strong physical force but at the same time a sexual awareness is also being experienced at the mental level. That sexual awareness within the field of consciousness is creating samskaras and karmas at a higher level. Normally we are observing the sexual energy in our body but we are not caring for the impression that the sexual awareness is creating in our consciousness. This impression is in the form of samskara, deep impressions, which also create a further tamasic state of being.

When we are affected by some insecurities or fears in life then, apart from the physical energy, we are also experiencing a dramatic change in consciousness. What happens at the level of consciousness is very subtle. These impressions are usually non-rational, non-mental impressions. The same thing happens with our desires, the desires for satisfaction to sustain the ego identity at a physical level, and also at a subtle level.

The level of energy and the level of consciousness are both being affected by an instinct. Initially in Laya Yoga, we have to manage these various natural instincts. If, with the awakening

of mooladhara chakra, one experiences intense sexual energy, one can channel it physically with bandhas, with the practice of selected asana and selected mudra such as *brahmacharya asana*, *moolbandha*, *ashwini mudra* and *vajroli mudra*. The mental component of this experience, the component of consciousness, can be controlled by a meditative process. This meditative process is the art of observation which is taught in Laya Yoga.

In the awakening of swadhisthana chakra, insecurities and fears are experienced. Physically one can control the energy manifestation with some Hatha Yoga practices. The impressions and samskaras which are created in the consciousness have to be managed by practices of dharana in which the agitations of the mind are removed and the depressing, disruptive samskaras are removed.

With the awakening of manipura chakra the third instinct of ahara, craving, desiring, being attached to a desire on the physical level, can be controlled with the practices of kriyas, and also with the help of Hatha Yoga. At the mental level the samskaras have to be erased with the practices of intense self analysis, and this system is taught in Laya Yoga.

Samskara

I am giving you these examples to just emphasize one idea, that every kind of energy manifestation creates a change in the normal behavior of mind. When the mind adapts itself to that behavior, then a specific samskara is created and that samskara becomes a limiting factor which does not allow the proper expansion of consciousness to take place.

One has to tackle the manifest and the unmanifest experiences at the same time. So, when we begin the practices of Laya Yoga, we, in a normal meditative state, become aware of the prevailing mental condition and experience. We then try to go to the source of that condition where, in the subtle aspect, the samskaras are being created. Then we create an inner harmony where mind remains free from every kind of impression and the natural creativity is able to manifest. So it

is an aspect of yoga which deals more with the level of mind and consciousness.

In order to perfect this Laya Yoga one has to have full control over the mental faculties, and therefore progression through the basic systems of yoga is very important. If you are able to follow a proper system then ultimately it is you who will be the winner. If not, we will be jumping from one thing to the next trying to find our balance some place, sometime, somehow. So, the first step in Laya Yoga is not allowing the samskaras to form – by observing and eliminating negative impressions of the instinctive consciousness.

Chakras and the second stage of Laya Yoga

After having purified the mind from the influences of the instincts, we begin to work at the level of chakras, to experience the purity of consciousness at each level of chakra awakening. If you see a wheel, especially in the old horse carts or bullock carts, then you will find that in the center, the axle is the static part, and the wheel rotates around that. This is the concept of the chakra too. The center of the chakra represents the pure consciousness which is static, stable and at peace with itself.

There is movement all around the center, and with the movement of energy we get caught in the outer ring and we are not able to go down to the source of consciousness which represents the state of attainment of that chakra. Realizing this attainment of consciousness and moving from that point of consciousness into the other higher states, is the next level of Laya Yoga practice.

Gunas and the third stage of Laya Yoga

The third level of Laya Yoga practice is control of the gunas. Gunas are known as cosmic attributes or forces governing our life. The gunas or attributes are said to be three: the sattwic state, the rajasic state and the tamasic state. Sattwa represents the purity and harmony which is of the inner self. Rajas represents the creative force on the positive side; self-orientated, selfish activity on the negative side. Tamas

represents stability on the positive side; insecurity and fear of change on the negative side. These are the three cosmic qualities which govern our life.

The gunas influence our actions in the material dimension, they influence our behavior and attributes in the subtle dimension. They also influence our experience of mind. The consciousness is constantly being affected by these three gunas. Please remember that when I use the word consciousness I mean the greater mind, not the manifest mind. At each level of awakening the force and the impact of the gunas also changes. The change of these attributes at different stages of awakening has to be properly observed and channeled, otherwise one experiences psychic imbalances.

Psychic imbalance is one of the most dangerous things in life. It is not a form of lunacy or psychotic behavior. One does not even know when one is suffering from such psychic imbalance, it is an imbalance in the ego, anything that one does carries a great force in it. A small negative reaction will have tremendous force in it, with the power to possibly change the whole society. A feeling of love or compassion on that level can change the entire society. Anything that happens at the level of ego, especially awakening of energy and consciousness at the ego level, gives a very powerful strength and energy to an individual.

Ego is a very powerful force when manifesting psychically. This is the interaction of guna, the cosmic attribute at various levels of consciousness, increasing its power and sensitivity. Definitely if one is not careful one can go the other way. For this reason there has been a very strong emphasis in ancient spiritual traditions on changing the lifestyle, so that for sometime one can isolate oneself from society so there is no possibility of attracting such influences. When one has reached a level of control and perfection then one can come out again. First become stable, then come out.

Let us put it in a different way. When we are going deep into these practices, then at that time the ego is being attracted by sensory and sensual attractions, seeking pleasure

and fulfillment. It is like giving a child a loaded gun to play with, that is how the inner self under the influence of ego, begins to play with the psychic forces.

When such people live in society, then society is a nice target because there are so many attractions and pleasures which give impetus to the negative guna. In order to control the negativity of the guna, the ancient spiritual traditions have said, “Live away from society where the senses are not attracted to the things outside, the mind is not distracted by different influences. By living away from everything you have time to stabilize yourself. After you have stabilized yourself, again come out and be a responsible member of human society with the ability to help and guide others also.” Therefore, psychic management is the third level of the Laya Yoga system.

Lokas and the fourth stage of Laya Yoga

The fourth level of Laya Yoga is working with lokas. At the level of energy, *sahasrara* at the crown of the head, represents the permanent state, the unchanging state of energy. At other levels the energy is continuously changing and evolving. In the same way, in the loka structure, the final loka, which is known as *satya*, represents the final state of consciousness which does not go through any changes. The other levels below *satya* represent progressive states of consciousness which progress from *sahasrara* consciousness, the human level, to transcendental levels. It is the knowledge, understanding and experience of the lokas and the different states of perfection in our life, different manifestations of creativity in our life, which is experienced and seen in the process of the fourth stage of laya.

So, in Laya Yoga there are four levels of practices. The first level is managing the consciousness of instincts. The second level is experiencing the chakras – chakra consciousness. The third aspect is managing the gunas and managing the psychic manifestations of the gunas. The fourth is understanding the transcendental dimensions of consciousness.

Starting Laya Yoga practice

Now the practice which we have started to do. In the morning we did a very simple dharana practice in which we were made to observe the inner space and feel the motionlessness and silence in that inner space. When you go into that experience of space where there is no movement of energy, where you observe only stillness and silence, then the mental faculties are withdrawn and focused into the state of silence.

It is in the state of silence, motionlessness and total stability, that one can evolve the true experience of human consciousness without it being changed by the movements of energy. We then begin to focus our mind on the symbol of the candle flame or any other symbol which can become a reference point to maintain and hold the attention. Otherwise the experience of *shoonya*, or nothingness, can become a very powerful force which can suck the active mind into a limbo state. The mind has to be still, yet aware of one external figure or symbol.

The symbol: yantra and mandala

There is a very beautiful concept in the tantras, and it is that of the yantra. We see pictures of yantras and people say they represent, or are the symbols of consciousness. The literal meaning of the word *yantra* is freeing or liberating the vehicle of consciousness. With its help the external consciousness can merge with the cosmic consciousness. The word yantra is made up of two different words put together, *yana* meaning the subtle vehicle, and *trayati* meaning liberation: the liberation of the subtle vehicle of consciousness.

Yantra can take a very simple or a very complex form. In the simple form it can be just one dot, it can be a flame, a triangle. It can also be in a slightly more complex form, a composition of geometrical figures. In its most complex forms it becomes a *mandala* in which the entire macrocosmic and microcosmic events merge.

We begin with the most simple one, which is easy to recreate in our mind, and on which the consciousness can fix itself. Holding the attention or awareness fixed on that

symbol, increasing our sensitivity to experience the vastness of inner space, its silence and stillness, we are able to awaken the akasha energy.

Akasha

The *akasha* energy, or the energy of space, which is the faculty of vishuddhi chakra is a very powerful force when activated and can push the mind into other dimensions. Space has unlimited potential, and space provides the basis for growth for the other elements. Our body grows in space. This building was constructed in the element of space. Nature grows in space. If there were no space there would be no chance of growth.

Space, in its all-pervasive nature has also been defined as Brahman. *Brahman* means the consciousness which allows growth to take place, holding the power of every other element within itself, at peace with every other element. Space is a unifying force, an expanding force, and it is represented in vishuddhi. So awakening the experience of the akasha tattwa and using that to experience consciousness is the aim of Laya Yoga.

In the structure of Laya Yoga mooladhara is like the black hole where the subtle forces are pulled together and concentrated in the form of matter. Mooladhara also has the possibility of again releasing that force, then that force manifests as akasha tattwa. Mooladhara is the black hole and akasha tattwa, the vishuddhi tattwa, is the white hole. In Laya Yoga there is a direct link between the two chakras. The practices that are taught aim at going into the mooladhara level and releasing the force of mooladhara at the vishuddhi level where a new birth can take place. One goes into the black hole to re-emerge in the white hole.

How important is the concept of guru for the study of Laya Yoga? Is it necessary to have a guru for this practice?

In my opinion a serious practitioner of yoga should not ask this question because yoga has to be understood in the form of a science. Medical science is one name, but within that

you have many different branches and you can specialize in many different subjects. If you want to be a master of surgery, you have to have the correct training. It is definitely not recommended that you walk around with a knife and cut up everyone you find – there has to be an understanding of the basic principles involved. That also applies with the system of practising yoga.

Those who think that they do not need a guru to practise yoga are thinking, in my opinion, wrongly. Definitely there have been exceptional people in history who have not needed the guidance of a guru in order to evolve but such people are truly exceptional in the world. If you consider yourself in that category, then go ahead and try. All our good wishes are with you, but definitely one needs the guidance and direction of a guru every step of the way. If you can tell me of some area in life where you do not need the guidance of a teacher, then I think you will be one of the exceptions. Definitely we need guidance to educate ourselves and therefore the guidance of guru is a must.

Could you explain the different types of sannyasa: jignasu, karma, rishi, poorna, and who is competent to receive initiation into them?

Let it be clear at the outset that we are not here to sell sannyasa in different colored bottles. Jignasu is not a yellow colored bottle, and Karma Sannyasa is not an orange colored bottle. In fact sannyasa is an alternate lifestyle.

There are two paths of evolution. One is known as *pravritti* where one is involved in the world. In this path evolution follows its natural pattern. The other path is known as *nivritti*, which is pursuing a desire to obtain freedom and liberation. The normal social life is the first path and the path of renunciation, self observation and harmonization is the second path.

Sannyasa is a system of living which evolved due to the spiritual influence in India. This spiritual influence is definitely very much part of the cultural environment. There have been two types of people in the world and these two

types of people have created two types of cultures. One type of people looked outwards and developed the external sciences. The other group of people looked inwards and developed spiritual practices and concepts. The first group is known as the western civilization and the other group is known as the eastern civilization.

I am not talking of any specific eastern tradition. Whether it be Indian or Chinese or Japanese or any other culture, we have to look at it from the point of view of experiencing spirituality in life. There is definitely a system of experiencing that inner spirituality. This vision of spirituality, when combined with a lifestyle, certain principles in life, a definite aim in life and with effort to awaken certain qualities in life, is known as *sannyasa*. *Sannyasa* is not monkhood, although externally there may be parallels. The meaning of *sannyasa* is twofold: *san* meaning balanced and harmonious expression and *nyasa* meaning proper use of the cosmic strength within.

In order to establish oneself in this lifestyle there are five 'S's which one must follow. The first 'S' is *samarpan*, or the ability to surrender to the divine will. The second is *swadhyaya*, the study of one's personal nature, self study. The third is *satsang*, being in the company or field of truth. The fourth is *sewa*, service. The fifth is *sneha*, which is having affection for all. These five 'S's rule the *sannyasa* life.

All these five 'S's belong to another 'S'. The mother 'S' is known as *sadhana*, in which the entire life process becomes a part of an effort to achieve higher realization. It is through *sadhana* that one perfects *sannyasa*. The process of *sadhana* is service, self analysis and self observation. It is expanding the consciousness to feel affection for everyone and overcoming the stages of like and dislike, being in the company of the truthful nature and, ultimately, surrendering to the divine will.

In order to live this lifestyle one has to begin by becoming aware of oneself and developing basic human qualities. One has to become mature in life. A *sannyasin* who is not mature is not a *sannyasin*. There has to be maturity of thought,

maturity in emotions, maturity in intellect and also maturity of expression. In the *Yoga Sutras* it is stated that this maturity is an important quality to develop in one's life. The aspects of yama and niyama represent such a level of maturity.

One has to begin at the first step. There have been powerful people, gurus, who have given only one form of initiation to many people and who, through their inner strength and inspiration, have maintained the aspirants in line. Nowadays such gurus are very hard to find. Most of us like to break every rule in the book because, for us, breaking the rule represents independence and freedom, but sannyasa says no.

The tradition of sannyasa says that discipline is necessary in order to overcome the external mental states so that ultimately one can experience freedom from within. In order to come to this level of inner maturity there are different grades of sannyasa.

The first one is *Jignasu Sannyasa* which means the seeker. This is the simplest way of sannyasa. You live how you want to live: alone or in a family, isolated or in society, working or without any job. Without coming into conflict with your normal lifestyle, you maintain the identity, the understanding, the aim that, "I am a seeker of the self. I am a seeker in the spiritual path." There is a particular sadhana which needs to be followed by such people which consists of cultivating certain qualities in life.

Once you have established yourself in the jignasu lifestyle, and you want to still progress further, there comes the second stage of Karma Sannyasa. In *Karma Sannyasa*, by leading a normal lifestyle and following another set of sadhana, by cultivating some more qualities, and by becoming more intensely aware of yourself, you are eventually able to renounce the attachments to the normal actions which link you to the world of the senses.

If you are interested in going still further, you adopt the lifestyle of Poorna Sannyasa. *Poorna Sannyasa* is another system in life, in which from time to time one has to live in isolation. Isolated from the society and the family under the guidance of a guru, one imbibes the teachings of the guru and

eventually comes to terms with oneself in order to ultimately overcome the individual ego. After that inner realization you again come out into the world and live the sannyasa lifestyle in your own right.

Like this there are other grades of sannyasa as well, but one thing to remember is that the entire sannyasa is based on the feeling of mutual trust and faith between the guru and disciple. It is the guru who first places his entire trust in the disciple, and this is where the disciple usually make their first mistake. They think they are placing their trust in the guru but it is not so. The guru is the one who places his first trust when he gives you the initiation, and that trust is giving you the degree before you begin your studies.

Which teacher in the world would give you the degree first? It is only the spiritual teacher who can do that, with the hope that one day you will be able to pass the class in which you have admitted yourself. In this context sannyasa is definitely not being part of a spiritual club.

Who can take sannyasa? That is the difficult question. Although everybody feels that they have the right to take it, I feel it needs some more self searching. You should ask yourself whether you really have the strength, the sincerity and the commitment to actually follow the aim in your life without any deviation. If you are sincere to yourself, if you are committed to your spiritual growth, if you feel that the world is not going to create barriers in front of you and if you feel that you will not be affected by the inner confusions and conflicts and are able to maintain a clear vision, then you are ready for such initiation.

So this is the question you must ask yourself, "Am I ready?" Ask yourself the five questions I have mentioned and if the answers are in the affirmative, then fine, go ahead. If you are uncertain, intellectually you desire it but you are not sure of some conditions or situations in life, then it is better to hold back. I would not want anyone to deceive themselves because definitely it is a path of integrity. Although we express our integrity in different ways, we have to eventually walk together towards the same goal.

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Mooladhara Dhyana

Remain seated comfortably. Maintain the body upright and straight, hands either on the knees or in the front, wherever you feel more comfortable. Eyes and lips gently closed. For some time hold this posture. Be relaxed and tension free.

Mentally visualize a full length mirror in front of you and in the mirror see a reflection of your body. Create the image of your body in the mirror. See your body reflected in the mirror. In the reflection see each and every part of the body. See the whole head and the face, the eyes, the ears, the nose and the mouth. See the shoulders and the neck, the right arm and the left arm, the whole trunk. Observe the position of the legs. Observe the position of the hands. See the whole body reflected in the mirror. Develop visual awareness of reflection in the mental mirror.

At the same time be aware of the existing condition within the body. The state of comfort or discomfort, tension or relaxation. Have a total knowledge of yourself by observing the body mentally, and also by observing the reflection of the body in the mirror.

Become aware of the flow of the natural breath. At the time of breathing in, feel the breath coming in through the left nostril and at the time of breathing out feel the breath go out from the right nostril. Again, inhaling the breath comes in through the right nostril and breathing out through the left nostril.

Develop the awareness by observing the breath flowing in the alternate nostrils. In left, out right; in right, out left. In this way go on observing the natural breath. Develop the intensity of concentration and feel the breath within the nostrils.

Now center your awareness in chidakasha, the space within the head which can be seen with the eyes closed in the form of a black screen. Visualize chidakasha in the form of a cave. The crown of the head is the ceiling of the chidakasha cave. The right side and the left side of the head are the walls. The forehead is the front wall with the third eye being the opening, the gate. The back of the head is the back wall. Experience the inner space in the form of a cave.

Look all around within you inside the cave.

In the back of the cave there is a small opening. It is an opening which leads into a tunnel. Go towards that tunnel and enter into the tunnel. Absolute darkness. No light. You just have to trust your instinct and follow the tunnel to the other end.

This tunnel passes through the spinal passage and descends to the lower regions of the body. You descend in this tunnel. Despite darkness all around there is no feeling of fear inside. Only a feeling of silence and stillness which envelops you as you descend in the tunnel.

When you reach the base of the spine the tunnel opens up into another cave. This cave is illuminated by a deep, gentle red light. Stand at the opening of the tunnel and see inside the cave. The cave is filled with soft, gentle, deep red light. The light is emanating from a stone which is situated in the center of the cave. Walk towards the stone.

As you walk towards the center you can feel the energy that pervades the cave. A feeling of intense vibration and power, all around you within the cave.

As you reach the center stone from where the light is radiating, you notice that the stone is in the shape of a shivalingam. A shivalingam which is glowing totally red, and a gentle light is emanating from this shivalingam, bathing the cave in its soft glow.

Sit down in front of the stone. Feel the energy and the power in the form of a very strong, subtle vibration.

Look at the shivalingam. Concentrate on it. As you observe the shivalingam you will notice that a shape is coiled around the stone. You realize that it is the kundalini shakti.

Sitting there in front of the luminous shivalingam, feel the waves of energy and power that surround you. Be aware of the force within you. Experience that force within you.

As you sit there experience your body becoming part of the element earth. The body becomes like a rock, or a mound of clay, or like a speck of dust, or like the entire planet – whatever form of element earth you identify with. Experience the throbbing pulsation of energy within you.

You have become part of the element earth. Experience the stability. Experience the solidity. Experience the firmness of the element earth.

By becoming one with the element of earth, observe the state of consciousness at that level.

What is the state of consciousness at that level? The consciousness in the tamasic state, totally fixed in the experience of matter. Any effort to create a change in consciousness will be impossible. Just experience the consciousness totally engrossed in matter. Now, see yourself get up in the cave and again you walk towards the opening of the tunnel. The red glow of the shivalingam is left behind you. You move up along the tunnel until you come back to the opening in chidakasha.

In the space of chidakasha, begin to experience the lightness of the body, lightness in the energy structure, lightness in the consciousness.

Breathe in deeply and chant om three times. With each chanting of om intensify the awareness. Awareness of internal lightness. Awareness of internal harmony. Awareness of the body vibrating with the vibrations of om. Breathe in.

Om Om Om Om Om . . .

Externalize the mind. Become aware of the environment around you, the temperature in the room, the people around you, other objects.

Slowly move the hands. Bring the palms together and rub them. Place the palms on top of the eyes, and then slowly open the eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

In this meditation we were practising becoming aware of the mooladhara chakra. The awareness of different chakras also evolves in this process, especially when you are able to increase your sensitivity and are able to differentiate between the experience of energy and consciousness. The energy experienced is one thing – where the movement of prana can sometimes be felt in the body. Sometimes this movement can also be a physical sensation, like tingling of the body,

movement of currents in the body and, many times, jerking of the body. Behind these experiences of energy one can also observe the state of consciousness. To observe this state you need to have the ability to go beyond thoughts and have the attitude of a witness, where you are aware of the state of consciousness which is experienced in different chakras.

In this meditation, the instructions were to observe the tamasic state of consciousness. You will find that in the course of your practice, as you evolve through the different stages of pratyahara, you will observe a very static condition of consciousness. In the static consciousness the mind becomes fixed and there is a very deep identification with the senses.

Empathy

Many years ago when I was practising such meditation, I experienced my body becoming like a tree. It was a very intense experience. Not a frightening one, but a very peculiar one, because there was absolutely no body consciousness at all. I remember opening my eyes, looking at myself, and saying to myself, “I have become a tree”. For the minutes that I was experiencing this state I observed my roots under the ground, the pressure of the earth on top of the roots, the thickness and the thinness of the roots, the curves of the roots, the depth of the roots, and also the trunk, the branches and the leaves. Also the movement of the wind in the leaves and the little bugs eating into the trunk. Then I got a fright that someone was eating into my body, and my consciousness came out – and what a relief!

I am telling you this to show you how deeply the mind identifies, and this identification blocks out every other perception of the mind. When I asked Paramahamsaji about this experience, he said it was of the consciousness in mooladhara. A similar experience can be had by observing oneself to be a speck of dust, or to be the whole planet, to be a mountain, to be a rock, and each level of consciousness can be experienced. The consciousness which is conditioned is one form. The rocks of a wall also have a conditioned

consciousness which is active within each piece of rock, and that is the tamasic state.

We are not saying tamasic in a negative sense. Tamasic has to be understood in the form of a conditioned perception. Then change takes place and there is a feeling of comfort and stability in the environment and in the space which we create for ourselves. After encountering this kind of experience it is not necessary to move into the consciousness of other forms. It is only required to recognize the state of stagnation. Stagnation is the conditioned consciousness.

After some time one gets the natural ability to instantly shift and project the mind into any form of matter, and to experience what the other form is experiencing. Some people have this as a natural ability and are known as empathis. For example, someone is having a pain in their big toe and then I become that body and I feel that pain also. Generally this ability is only between individuals but it can also develop to experience the consciousness of an inanimate object.

From conditioned to unconditioned consciousness

In this way empathy represents the tamasic state of consciousness, where one experiences the conditioned nature of another person or object, whether animate or inanimate. Then moving on to other levels we can also experience the consciousness of swadhisthana, manipura and other chakras and we are able to convert the conditioned consciousness into a universal, expansive consciousness.

If you want to observe your own states of consciousness in order to practise Laya Yoga, I would suggest that you begin with the meditation that we did today, developing the feeling of empathy. Without getting caught in that conditioned state, without identifying with that and feeling its negativity, move from one level to another level. These practices have also been mentioned in the book *Dharana Darshan* where the series is known as *Pancha vyoma dharana*, or *Vyoma panchaka dharana*, meaning concentration on the five spaces of consciousness. With proper care one can evolve through these stages.

I feel very strongly that we should not mess around with the mind until we know the intricate nature of the mind, until we are able to develop awareness of its nature and manage the conditions that arise with manifestations of different natures. So perfect yourself first in the practices of concentration and visualization, to increase the inner sensitivity and to know the experiences of the inner mind. Have the aim of always transcending and perfecting yourself. The indications of your progress are that you will become clearer mentally. There will be a reduction of unnecessary attractions, not only those for sensual, sensory enjoyment, reduction of unnecessary desires and greater ability to use the faculties of mind, awakening of viveka, discrimination and also of vairagya, detachment.

These are some of the indications of your progress in your spiritual life. A few months back someone asked Paramahamsaji how one can know if one is evolving spiritually. He answered, "The major indication of progress in spiritual life is lessening of desires." Even Buddha mentioned the same thing, he said, "In order to be realized, in order to attain nirvana, finally one has to give up the desire to obtain nirvana." So it is overcoming desires.

Reduction of desires always represents transcendence and purification of mind. It does not mean you suddenly become desireless. If God almighty could not become desireless then how can we become desireless? God definitely had a desire when he said or thought to himself, "I am one, let me become many." So if that omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent force could not become desireless, then how can we who are minipotent, miniscient, become suddenly desireless? But definitely with the awakening of the faculty of discrimination one can reduce the external desires which create the craving for pleasures, and use the force of desire to experience different states of consciousness.

Harmony in our Internal and External Life

Yoga, the heritage of humanity

We have seen the remnants of yoga in South American civilizations, in Scandinavian countries and in North African countries dating back seven, eight and nine thousand years. There has been ample evidence to make us believe that due to the death of different civilizations and possibly due to natural calamities and political changes, the knowledge of yoga was lost by different sections of humanity.

Yoga was preserved by the ancient sannyasins in the Indian sub-continent. So, in this modern age yoga is again being revived by the sannyasins and credit goes to India for nurturing, evolving and reviving this ancient system of life. But yoga is definitely the heritage of humanity. We don't know how it all began, whatever we can say will be speculation, but we can believe that from the moment man made the first enquiry about the state of his being, yoga evolved.

Yoga therapy

Different investigations have been carried out in the world to see the efficacy of yoga. They have experimented with yoga in therapy and have found that many physical illnesses can be managed effectively with simple yoga practices. In Australia and in the USA, yoga was tried for the management of cancer, in New Zealand it was used in the management of

psychiatric problems, in India yoga was tried in managing different diseases like diabetes, asthma, hypertension, and yoga has proved to be very successful.

In America, one medical doctor is experimenting with yoga to avoid bypass surgery and, in England, some swamis are experimenting with the management of AIDS and the results so far have been very encouraging and satisfying. So in the therapy aspect scientists and doctors are exploring the healing power of yoga. Also, in order to overcome mental imbalance, yoga is being tried in many places in order to overcome drug addiction, to overcome criminal mentality, to manage psychic imbalances. Such research is being successfully carried out in the USA and in India.

In France itself, a very unique research was done with yoga and education. As a result of the experiments which have been conducted since 1977, this year in Paris, there is going to be a gathering of people from various sections of the education system. Eminent educationalists from different countries are participating and it will provide a new impetus for the integration of yoga in the educational system.

There has been a great acceptance of yoga by the scientists of the world and new areas of yoga are being looked into. In our ashram we have some projects related to yoga and the biggest of them is establishing a Yoga University, the first one of its kind in the world. We are also integrating yoga into the medical system of India, teaching yoga in prisons to reform the criminal mentalities and in the army to help soldiers manage their mental problems.

All these different projects convey the acceptance of yoga by society. From such activities we can see that yoga is not limited to an individual experience of awakening spirituality in one's life but it also has the capacity to heal people who come into contact with it and to make them more in tune with their inner nature.

The sannyasa tradition

You may see some of us in this dress coming to teach yoga. There can be fears and apprehensions, no doubt, "Who are

those extra-terrestrials who have come?" But we are nothing like that. We are ordinary human beings who have committed ourselves to the propagation of yoga and who have adopted the lifestyle of the sannyasin. *Sannyasa* is an ancient tradition which aims to preserve *vidya* or wisdom so that this knowledge is not lost to humanity, not only spiritual wisdom but also natural wisdom.

We consider Einstein to be the modern father of the atomic theory but if you look at the ancient literature, a swami discovered the same theories of relativity and atomic principles five thousand years ago. He has written a book and there is literature on the subject which you can compare with any of the modern books. You will find he is more clear, more in depth. We consider Freud and Jung to be the founders of the modern psychological systems but if you look at the system of Sage Patanjali it is nothing but psychology. Like this I can name hundreds of people who have contributed to the development of human society and who have always been recognized and identified as sannyasins. So we are proud to belong to a tradition which has upheld the concept of *vidya* throughout history.

We do not represent any religious structure, we represent a lifestyle which is dedicated in present times to the propagation of yoga. Therefore as long as we are aware of the need to evolve we shall feel the need to adopt yoga in our life. Whether you call the system yoga or use any other name, it makes no difference. In every language the names of diseases are different but the symptoms are always the same and the method of treatment is always the same. You might change the name of yoga according to the cultural context, according to the acceptability of the human mind, but the theories, the concepts, the practices will always remain the same. The entire life can be termed yoga also because yoga means the state of harmony or union and this union is external as well as spiritual.

Yoga Philosophy

Intensity of practice

I am not going to speak to you on the general aspect of yoga which is related to asana and pranayama, although that will definitely be part of our activity here. I would like to tell you something in depth about yoga. Just as you have to concentrate to hear me, and are feeling the intensity of concentration, just as you are now trying to block off the external sounds and, despite all the noises, are trying to listen carefully, in the same way, with the same intensity, you have to practise yoga.

That intensity has to be felt very deep inside because yoga is a process of attaining perfection. When somebody wants to shoot at the bull's eye, in order to align with the target they have to close one eye, focus very deeply, obtain total concentration, become one with the target and then shoot the arrow. In the same way, when you practise yoga internally you have to be totally fixed on the target. By this I hope you have understood that yoga is not a flimsy process in which, whenever one desires, one does some asana and pranayama or meditation. It is a process by which we try to intensify our awareness in order to attain the goal which we have set for ourselves. This can be attained by developing the faculties of mind, by developing the concentration of mind and by re-educating the mind. One thing to remember, and which is important, is that in yoga the prime effort is to educate and discipline one's self. That has been the main aim of yoga from the beginning.

You have been hearing about the Bihar Yoga Bharati which we are starting in Ganga Darshan, India. It will initially have three areas of interest: yoga philosophy, yoga psychology and applied yoga. Today we will discuss the first aspect of this which is yoga philosophy. Tomorrow we will discuss yoga psychology and the day after tomorrow applied yoga. We will see how, in all these three areas, yoga can help us progress in life.

The importance of conceptual understanding

In the western countries people have identified more with the physical aspect of yoga. The practices of asana, pranayama and relaxation techniques are well known and many people are more adept at these practices than all of us put together. Definitely they give a feeling of physical harmony but at the same time there are other aspects of yoga that we must practise and understand. Gradually we have to learn the theory and the philosophy of yoga. Unless we know the basic thoughts related with yoga, we shall not be able to appreciate its beauty and quality. It is in this direction that we move now.

Using your head

Yoga maintains that an individual is a combination of different qualities. These qualities manifest in our lives at different times and they become the basis of our interaction with the family, society and the world.

In our normal life we use the faculty of head extensively. Head represents the quality of rationality, intellect, but head also has the capacity to realize what is not understandable by intellect. There are two dimensions of human experience. One is the external, which is physical and material. The other is internal, which is psychic and spiritual. In both these dimensions of human experience the awareness, knowledge, understanding and wisdom which we get are applied to develop and better our own lifestyles.

What is the purpose of gaining knowledge in the external sense? The purpose of knowledge has always

been to improve our mind, interaction, behavior and action. If gaining knowledge does not give us the ability to co-ordinate and perfect our actions, our behavior and our inner expressions, then there is no purpose in gaining knowledge. It is the expansion of the mental receptivity which makes us capable of interacting more effectively and efficiently in the world. Do you agree with that? So that means that the powers of intellect play a very vital role in our life but we have only used part of the faculties of head, and we have conditioned ourselves to believe and act in a certain way.

Conditioning can be both negative and positive. It depends on how we apply the wisdom and knowledge which we have gained. If the application of rationality is done with self oriented ideas in order to gain temporary satisfaction, enjoyment, status and name, then that knowledge becomes restrictive. If the faculties of rationality are used to develop our own nature, if they are used to bring us closer to higher realizations, then that knowledge becomes expansive. So one aim of yoga is to awaken the other aspect of intellect where we become aware of the internal experiences. This helps us to integrate our own personality in a much better way.

Using your heart and hands

The other faculty which we use a lot in our life is the faculty of heart. The heart has always represented the emotions, sensitivity, the aspect of feeling, but even the expression of the faculty of heart has been restricted. The aspect of feeling is very much centered and directed towards self satisfaction. We have not been able to develop the unconditioned nature of the heart. This is another effort for yoga practice.

The third quality which we express in our life is of the hands. Hands represent the ability to perform an action creatively. This faculty of the hands is the outcome of a balance between head and heart. If the head is not right then the actions will not be right. If the heart is not right then the actions will not be right.

These are the three main qualities that manifest in our life, and yoga aims to sublimate the manifest nature of these three qualities in order to attain perfection and fulfillment. This can help us live our lives more fully, with greater understanding of ourselves in relation to the world and the cosmos, but at the same time we have to recognize the conditions of life in which we live.

Taking care of your roots

Our life is like a tree and we only see the parts which grow up above the ground, we don't see the roots which are underground. We take good care of the body. We beautify our body every day and try to remove all the bacteria and viruses that affect our body through different medications. However we still find that we are sick both physically and mentally because we have never actually looked at the roots of the tree and we have never tried to water them. Therefore the foundation of our life is quite weak.

In many situations, in times of shock, in times of suffering and pain, we break down. We are not able to manage what goes on in our minds, we are not able to handle what happens to us and there are very strong reactions. This shows the weakness of our tree of life. Yoga teaches us how to take care of the roots. It is a method by which we can water the roots, supply them with the necessary nutrients and thus lead a very happy, healthy, strong and solid life.

The roots of this tree are in the mind and in the spirit. Yoga has emphasized awareness of mind. You will see this when you study the classical texts on yoga, not of the Hatha Yoga but of Raja Yoga and other advanced yogas. For the sake of our understanding let us just pick up the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali.

Self discipline

The beginning of the *Yoga Sutras* is most important in order to understand the process of yoga. In the first couple of sutras Sage Patanjali has defined the whole process of yoga when he says that yoga is a form of discipline by which we can learn to

manage the mental fluctuations. The word 'discipline' here is most important, and the concept of discipline has to be understood properly.

Normally we think discipline to be an imposed rule but actually it is a process of re-educating ourselves. In any stage or condition of life one needs to follow certain disciplines. For a student studying in a school there is a discipline which has to be followed. This discipline represents the state of perfection within ourselves, it represents the state of understanding within ourselves.

Even when we drive a car we have to follow a system. If we don't follow the system we can't drive the car properly. It is impossible to start the car in fourth gear. It is impossible to start the car with the handbrake on. A system is necessary, and a proper understanding of that system and its structure which makes us realize the harmony that is within.

Harmony

Harmony is the meaning of yoga. People say yoga means union but can there be union without harmony? If there is no harmony there cannot be any form of union. Union is the outcome of this state of harmony. If the body is sick then it has to be made well, and health is the harmony in this context. If the mind is unbalanced it has to be brought into balance and mental health is harmony in this context. So harmony is the actual meaning of the word yoga and harmony has to be felt at every stage of life.

So we first have to consider the areas of life where we need to create inner harmony. Yoga begins with the practices of the body because body is something with which we can identify very quickly and deeply. If there is a pain, stiffness or disease in any part of the body we know that it is there. In fact we can even say that the majority of our awareness revolves around the physical condition.

Since we identify intimately and deeply with the body, in the initial stages of yoga we work with our body with the help of asana, pranayama and other Hatha Yoga practices. Once physical harmony is obtained then we automatically become

aware of some mental needs. We begin to feel the pressure of the stress and tension in our minds, so that becomes the next area of work in yoga – how to release tension, how to release stress, how to experience inner relaxation. In this process we also learn how to focus ourselves, so in this way we see the practices of yoga gradually evolving from body to mind.

Becoming aware of new horizons

The practices can also evolve up to the spiritual level but we stop after coming to the superficial awareness of mind because we think we have completed and attained everything that we wanted or needed to attain. We lack the understanding of the other areas of life which in subtle ways continue to guide the performances of our life. So, we have to begin by developing an awareness of the different structures and areas of life. We have to develop awareness of the different dimensions of life and use the practices of yoga to harmonize these different dimensions and the activities which happen in these different dimensions.

The concept of human personality is very vast and broad in yoga. Yoga is not concerned with the body nor with the spiritual nature of a person. Yoga is not concerned with individual aspirations and desires, though of course they are fulfilled in the course of time. The main concern of yoga is with the development of the total human personality. Yoga has felt that human beings interact on different levels which have been defined in the form of dimensions or states of mind. They start with the most physical level and include the most subtle, encompassing psychic and spiritual areas also.

We will have to look into the theory of human personality in order to know the depth of yoga. We shall try to look at the various aspects of human nature because it is only after we have become aware of the different stages which govern and direct our life that we will be able to apply yoga and attain our goal. The goal, according to yoga, is to find perfection in life. Realization or union with God may be the outcome of that perfection. The perfection which we attain is the result of knowledge about ourselves.

An artist who tries to create a beautiful picture is not able to create the picture instantaneously. In the expression of creativity there is awareness, there is knowledge, there is harmony and there is a deep understanding of nature. Only with these qualities can a person become a genius whether one is an artist, a musician, a yogi, a good householder or a good human being. So perfection is the aim of yoga and everything else is the result of that perfection.

Since we are trying to know how we can integrate yoga into our life we have to begin with awareness of ourselves in the present condition. We have to know what the potentialities and possibilities are that exist within, and use those strengths and possibilities to reach a higher awareness in life.

Yoga Psychology

Accessing the deeper levels of personality

Kirtans are a method for coming close to one's inner nature. They are not the chanting of religious names. Kirtans are actually mantras. Mantras may be thought of as being a religious name, a name of a god, but mantra actually means the force that liberates the mind. Chanting a mantra gives a combination of different sounds, syllables, which help to stimulate and awaken the different psychic centers in the body. You are well aware of the effect of music on people's minds. There are some forms of music which passify the mind and there are some forms of music which stimulate the mind. The mantras work in a similar way but at a much deeper level, they harmonize the pranic body of an individual. That in turn influences the mental body, that in turn influences the physical body and it is here that we begin with our subject of the human personality.

Generally things start from the physical dimension and then influence the subtle dimensions of human nature but in yoga things happen the other way round. Things begin by effecting the psychic and the pranic levels, and gradually the effect of that change is felt in the mental and physical body. In order to understand what happens at deeper levels of our personality we need to know how yoga looks at human nature. We can say that the entire personality consists of physical, mental and spiritual dimensions. In yoga divisions are made even more deeply in order to understand the intricate nature of human personality.

The koshas

This whole concept has been defined in the form of the koshas or dimensions. The dimensions which yoga speaks about are not the same as the dimensions of physics; we are not speaking of time, space and object. Here the concept of dimension deals with the human ability to interact in different levels where the experiences belong to the realms of consciousness and energy. The subtle levels of human consciousness and the subtle levels of energy manifestation are the actual dimensions with which yoga relates.

Externally dimensions may change. We may live in the dimension of space, time and object. We may experience the dimension of time, which is the fourth dimension. We may even evolve concepts of different dimensions but the fact remains that it is human nature which has to interact. It is the human nature which has to understand and realize different levels of the external dimension and different levels of internal experiences, so yoga has given more thought to the composition of human personality.

Yoga has seen the human personality in five different stages. These five different stages are different dimensions in which we interact. The concept of interaction includes not only the performance of action but the total expression of human behavior in different stages of life. We behave differently when we encounter an emotional situation, an intellectual situation or a physical situation. In each situation our thoughts, behavior, attitude, feelings and actions change, and each change gives a different understanding of the different stages of life.

Therefore yoga speaks of five stages or levels of interaction which are known as koshas. The five koshas have been translated as different bodies and they can also be translated as different dimensions. However we define them, the reality they refer to is our ability to interact, to understand and to adjust different levels of experience which arise in different stages of consciousness and energy.

Consciousness and energy

If consciousness does not exist in our life, then living will have no meaning. If energy does not exist in our life, then life will have no meaning. The entire life situation and structure is a combination of consciousness and energy. Yoga sees that the consciousness of every individual needs to evolve and the energy of every individual needs to be freed. At present our consciousness functions in a limited way. It has some ability to understand situations but in relation to one's self only, not in a broader sense. Energy manifests within us, in the body and also in the mind, but the manifestation of energy is self oriented. The energy is used to fulfil stages, ambitions or attainments but only those which are goals for our personal satisfaction.

Yoga sees that consciousness and energy have unlimited potential which can be utilized in order to improve our life. One of the aims of yoga is to awaken and expand the field of consciousness and to awaken and free the force of energy within. This is also the basic philosophy of Tantra of which yoga is a part. Tantra is an ancient system of theory and practice which aims at liberating the human mind so that ultimately it becomes awakened and perfect regardless of one's lifestyle or belief, regardless of one's religious or cultural background.

We are passing through a phase of evolution in which our external life follows a pattern but in actuality our inner life is free from the conditions of those patterns. The aim of Tantra has been to liberate and expand the human consciousness and to liberate and awaken the energy within, so that we can experience the totality of life and not a defined structure of life. Yoga, being part of Tantra, aims at providing this understanding of human nature so that through a process of self observation and working upon ourselves, we can go beyond the normal range of human perception and experience the universality of our nature.

Annamaya kosha, the dimension of matter

Human nature is seen in five stages or levels. The first level is the material dimension. It is the dimension of matter. Matter

relates to the body, its activities and to the experience of the physical senses from which we derive certain knowledge and understanding of external life. Normally we work with our five senses of the body which see, hear, taste, touch and smell. You know the five senses which we all use.

These senses give us the knowledge of certain conditions which surround us. Through the eyes we are able to observe the environment. Through the ears we are able to listen to the sounds and vibrations which are created in our environment and we are able to understand them. Through the senses of smell, touch, taste we are able to smell, feel and taste our immediate environment. In this way we gain knowledge of the external, physical, manifest dimension.

This physical interaction alters the nature of the human mind and consciousness. If you happen to see, smell or touch a beautiful flower, then it creates certain responses in the mind and body which makes you appreciate and like that flower. But, if you smell a piece of rotten flesh, if you see a piece of rotten flesh, then that creates another form of response in the mind which makes us reject that experience, and we immediately look for something pleasant.

So the senses do alter the normal pattern of our consciousness and mind. This alteration of consciousness is definitely experienced by the body because the body is the medium by which the mind expresses itself in the external dimension. So the manifest dimension of matter, which is the first level of human experience, is influenced by the senses, and the responses which we express are in accordance with the sensory reactions. This is the first physical dimension in which we live and interact. Is this clear?

Manomaya kosha, the mental dimension

Then we go to the next level which is the mental dimension or manomaya kosha. Manomaya means full of mind. The concept of mind is different in yoga. Modern psychology accepts the mind as conscious, subconscious and unconscious. Yoga accepts a similar theory but with more additions. It says that there are four natures of mind:

conscious, subconscious, unconscious and the fourth one, awakened consciousness.

In these four stages of mental manifestation we observe the interaction of the thoughts, we observe the interactions of ego, we observe the interactions of emotions and feelings. These actually guide the response to the external physical senses, and not only to the senses but also the mental attention, and not only the mental attention but also the states of like and dislike.

Attraction and repulsion

In fact we can say that attraction and repulsion are the main forces which govern our mind. We are attracted towards things which give us a sense of pleasure, we reject those things which give us a sense of suffering and pain. Whether it happens intellectually or emotionally it makes no difference. Attractions and repulsions control the logical process of the mind as well as the emotional experiences of the mind.

Emotionally you may be attracted to somebody or emotionally you may feel hatred towards somebody. Logically you may be attracted to somebody, intellectually you may reject somebody. Feeling-wise you may accept something; feeling-wise you may reject something. The forces of attraction and repulsion are very strong in our lives. We can even say that they control our entire behavior. If you didn't want to be here you would get up and walk out of the room and if you do want to be here, then you will fight with the organizers to be here. Whatever our feelings, they are governed by attraction and repulsion. Whether they are intellectual or emotional in nature, whether they have an egotistical manifestation or not, whatever the form, all this belongs to the mental dimension.

Yoga speaks of beginning to re-educate this particular area of our life. It is the most complex thing to do but without it we will not be able to survive in this society. We need to have some sort of control over the mind in order to survive in society. If you or I are expected to behave in a certain way in a certain situation, then we try to comply to the best of our ability, without trying to disturb the

atmosphere. In this process many times we have to struggle with ourselves. Many times we have to say, “Okay mind, you keep quiet. We have to go through this.” Has that happened to you? It has happened to me many times, especially when I have to meet with groups who are totally unreceptive. I’m happy we don’t have such a situation here. So, the mental dimension is the dimension which yoga seeks to re-educate and control.

Raja Yoga: the conditioned mind and the free mind

In the eightfold path of yoga which Sage Patanjali talks about, the main direction is in observing, realizing and perfecting the states of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. In these three stages of Raja Yoga, the entire effort is to realize the nature of mind. Mind is not one. Mind is pure and impure both. Impure does not mean full of toxins. Impure means conditioned by the senses. It means conditioned by the environment and situations. Pure means that mind which is free. Pure means that mind which is able to express itself creatively without any kind of adjustment with the environment. Without any kind of conditioning.

We work at the level of impure mind, the conditioned mind. In the conditioned mind we see only a partial area of life and we are not able to see the beauty of life. We identify with suffering and pain but not with the underlying beauty. Struggle and pain, they are the normal processes of life. I remember when I was young and my teeth were appearing I used to have a lot of pain. I’m sure we all have had the same experience, but once the teeth appear, then it’s a pleasure. You can eat anything, chew anything, digest anything.

Initially any kind of transformation is painful. Without pain and suffering there cannot be any kind of change. Suffering is due to the change of conditioning of human nature. Some people accept, some people reject but it is not a question of either accepting or rejecting, because they are states of life anyway.

Paramahamsaji, our master, used to say one sentence, “There is no peace in the Himalayas and there is no noise

in the world.” If you are at peace with yourself, even in the middle of Paris you will not feel disturbed. If you are disturbed within yourself, then you can go to the remotest corner of the world and still feel the disturbance internally, you will never find peace.

Peace only exists in the states of mind. This is a very good example of how the mental dimension has to be directed, channelled and controlled so that we can experience the purity of self, and not the conditioned nature of self. The practices of yoga, especially concentration and meditation, aim to achieve this. If they cannot provide us with such harmony then there is something wrong with our practice, because how much can one escape from oneself? Where can you escape from yourself? We want to escape from ourselves, from our weakness and our problems but we end up by changing only the external situation. The cause goes with us wherever we go and the cause is *dans la tête*. So the aspect of mind management is the main direction of Raja Yoga. In this way we are able to channel the activities of our mental dimension.

Action rather than reaction

One thing more which I would like to tell you is that our entire interaction with the world is a reactive process. We are people who have never learned how to act. Rather we have been taught from the very beginning how to react. In the name of acting we are constantly reacting. That is because of the nature of the impure mind. When we attain the pureness of mind or consciousness, then we forget how to react and we learn how to act. Then we and our actions are uninfluenced by the external situations, by circumstance and people.

We are constantly being influenced by people. We think we have the power of discrimination but we misguide ourselves in believing others. If somebody tells you that I am a very bad person, without thinking twice, you will believe it. The thought, “Maybe he’s not a bad person”, will never come. That shows the weakness of an individual mind. Am I right

or wrong? We tend to believe in things which are, or may be, unreal and false, yet we take pride in our intellectual abilities. So right here there is a very big conflict. Do we believe in our mind or do we believe in our experience?

Experience represents the pure nature of mind. External influence, according to which we believe and react, represents the impure nature of mind. Yoga has always emphasized the aspect of human personal experience. Yoga has said, “These are the theories, and these are the ways to realize yourself. Experiment and find out.” Therefore the entire process of yoga is in rediscovering the self and not imposing another condition on our conditioned nature, and all this work takes place in the mental dimension.

Pranamaya kosha, the dimension of energy

After working with the mental dimension we move into the third dimension of life which is pranic in nature. It is the dimension of energy where irrational feelings play a very important role. You know, many times when we are walking down a road, somebody passes us and we get a funny feeling from that person. Sometimes it is of fear or uncertainty and sometimes of immense love and compassion. We don't know who the person is, but we feel that person. We may go somewhere – in that place, in that house, we feel very light and happy, or sometimes we feel very suppressed.

How does that happen? Why does that happen? There is an energy field all around. Intellectually we are not able to feel that energy field but there is a part of our consciousness which is receptive to it. When it creates an impression on the mind, then we are able to experience the feeling either in the form of acceptance or rejection. There can be a feeling of comfort or discomfort. This interaction happens at the level of energy and it is definitely a non-rational experience. Intellectually nobody can explain it but at a deeper level of our mind we experience this change. Yoga says that prana is the vital force of life and this vital force exists in everything whether it is an animate object or an inanimate object.

Each aspect of creation is radiating energy. A leaf from a tree, a stone, an animal, and a human being all radiate this pranic energy. There is no aspect of creation which is devoid of energy, but for a human being the experience of that energy happens at a subtle level. This level is beyond the area of intellect, rather we can say that it is the awareness or knowledge that comes from being in touch with the source of life.

This dimension of energy is a very important area of human behavior and interaction because the energy influences the mind and also the body in different ways. Without realizing it, we, the body, the mind, behave in a certain way due to the influence of pranic energy. I give you the example of music. Music can either relax or stimulate a person. If we play classical music some people will fall asleep, here, right now. If we have rock'n'roll, then this floor will fall down – everybody will be up jumping and dancing. Why does that change happen? Why does that vibration alter our mind and the functions of the body? It is working on the human personality at the level of vibrations.

The whole theory of kundalini says that each and every experience of life is governed by energy activity. In fact the conditions of our body and mind, and also the different levels of consciousness, are influenced by the manifestation of the energy within. The manifestation of energy changes our entire perception and the performance of the body. This is the subtle aspect, yet it is a very prominent aspect of our nature. Learning to recognize this is an aim of yoga. There are many practices for attaining this understanding but we are not going to go into the practice aspect now.

Vijnanamaya kosha, the dimension of wisdom

The fourth dimension, beyond the energy dimension, is known as vijnanamaya kosha, the dimension of inner wisdom. This wisdom is different from the external intellectual knowledge. It is experiencing the knowledge within.

I'll tell you the story of my great grandfather who was a very famous scientist. While he was a bachelor he was studying

in a medical college. The professor asked the students to define the taste of cyanide poison. Of course, every one knows that if you take cyanide then it's hari om tat sat, but my great grandfather decided to for the sake of science.

He sat down at a table with a glass of cyanide in one hand, paper and pen in the other. He quickly drank the glass of cyanide, wrote something on the piece of paper and died. When they came to see why he had committed suicide they found a note which said, "I'm giving my life for the sake of science. I'm not yet married but I want to name my great grandchild Swami Niranjan." Then they saw the inscription on the paper, it was one single letter 'S'.

Now in English 'S' can stand for many things. A medical colleague of my great grandfather said, "'S' stands for sweet, therefore the taste of cyanide is sweet." Another colleague said, "No! 'S' stands for sour, therefore the taste of cyanide is sour". The third colleague said, "Both of you are wrong, 'S' stands for salty, and therefore the taste of cyanide is salty." And my great grandfather, who was dead, opened his eyes and said, "All of you are wrong, only I know the taste, and I can't describe it." So that is the true story of my great grandfather.

This is the difference between intellectual knowledge and a knowledge which has been experienced. Intellectual knowledge can think about many things and mix up realities according to the prevalent concept in the mind. Experienced knowledge experiences reality as it is, and that is known as wisdom. This is the fourth dimension of our life, where we go beyond the interpretation of knowledge and live the knowledge. When we live the knowledge there is union with the entire world.

Anandamaya kosha, the dimension of bliss

The fifth dimension is where we experience bliss and harmony, where we have overcome all the conditionings of life and have experienced the universal consciousness which is beyond every name, which is beyond every idea, which is beyond every form. There the nature of reality is undecaying reality

and that is the last dimension of human experience. This is the concept of the yogic personality and in this personality we see the possibility of evolution.

If we cannot awaken the dormant faculties and experience these dimensions in normal life then yoga practices have no meaning for us. Whether we practice asanas or pranayamas, Hatha, Raja, Kriya or Kundalini Yoga, whether we practice mantra or any other system of yoga, in normal life we need to sensitize ourselves. We need to develop an awareness within ourselves which can experience a broad structure of life and not remain confined to a limited area of life.

There is a very nice statement in the Ishavasya Upanishad which says, “In the beginning it was full, in the middle it was full, in the end it was full. If you take away full from the full, zero from zero, what remains is full. If you divide full by the full, only full remains. If you multiply the full by the full only full remains”.

The person who can't do this is the biggest fool. Life has to be seen in this same way. There is a great area and potential of life which we have not seen or tapped, but because of that inability to experience the fullness of life we cannot claim that life is incomplete. If we say that life has no meaning, if we say that life doesn't represent anything, then there is no greater fool than us. The aim of yoga is to realize the fullness of life and that can happen in every moment of the day. If we begin to live each moment more fully we shall experience the fullness and not be a fool anymore.

Satsang

What is the real meaning of Jignasu Sannyasa? What responsibility does it entail? As a Jignasu Sannyasin, how is one expected to behave in an ashram, in the family and in society?

First of all I should tell you that yoga and sannyasa are two different things. Yoga is a group of techniques and practices which one can do in order to realize and discover the inner nature. Anyone and everyone is capable of practising yoga, from a child to an aged person, from a person who is involved in the world to a person who renounces the world. One should not mix the principles of yoga with sannyasa life and it is not necessary to adopt the sannyasa life if one wants to practice yoga. Yoga is a system of going within. It is a system by which we harmonize the body, mind and spirit. There are different groups of practices in it such as Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga and other yogas.

Sannyasa is a lifestyle. It is totally different to the theory, the philosophy and the practice of yoga. Normally sannyasa has been related with the monastic life but in my understanding that is a limited and limiting concept of sannyasa. We have to first understand the meaning of sannyasa. It is a lifestyle which emphasizes the realization of two faculties or qualities: discrimination and non-attachment, viveka and vairagya.

Discrimination and non-attachment

The aspect of discrimination represents the broad perception of mind. It implies a natural understanding of life situations

and then the use of the inherent ability of discrimination in order to find the right balance. Discrimination is not an intellectual process. It is a process of knowing the right and the wrong. Wrong here does not mean something negative, but something which is not conducive to the growth of our minds, something which does not help the process of inner awakening. That is the concept of wrong according to sannyasa, something which does not help us to understand our own selves. In discrimination we are aware of what is useful and what is not useful and we are able to strike a balance between these two stages.

The other aspect is of non-attachment. It is normal in life to become attached to something, it represents an emotional attachment and at the same time it intensifies the feeling of ego, of possessiveness. If we have to become detached then that process of detachment is suffering. We have to make an effort so that we do not become attached and yet there is a natural acceptance. We do not try to detach ourselves by rejecting certain things and creating inner conflict, or pain and suffering inside. Non-attachment is the middle path. Things may be there but we are not possessive about them. There is no influence of attachment on our mind or behavior.

If you see a lotus flower then you will know that it grows in mud and water but the flower is not affected by the water at all. Even the leaves of the flower reject water, if you put some drops of water on top of them they will roll off. The leaves and flower never become wet, they always maintain their crispness and purity. In the process of non-attachment we live in the world but we are not affected by the world to the extent that it changes our inner nature. This is the theory of non-attachment.

These two, discrimination and non-attachment, are the main bases of sannyasa lifestyle. Sannyasa in the course of time became associated with renunciates, with people who desired to leave society and its influences and to lead a solitary life where they could work on themselves. These renunciates became known as sannyasins but this is an extreme example

of the sannyasa lifestyle because if we follow the principles of our nature then we can live any kind of life, anywhere, be involved in everything and continue to maintain our inner clarity and balance.

In order to maintain the inner clarity and balance we have to make an effort, and we need to adopt a lifestyle which can help us in the process of finding this balance. It is in this context that we have to understand sannyasa. What is the use of living in the mountains in solitude if we cannot find inner balance? What is the use of renouncing the world when, while living normally, we are experiencing balance? So renunciation is a different thing and it has nothing to do with sannyasa. There are different degrees or levels in sannyasa lifestyle too but before we discuss these different lifestyles there are some other aspects of sannyasa which one must know.

Five aspects of sannyasa

The rules which govern the lifestyle of sannyasa are:

1. to be involved in self study,
2. to be involved in the service of other people,
3. to be involved in the discovery of truth,
4. to be involved in sadhana, a method of attaining perfection in life,
5. to have the ability to surrender to the divine will so that we do not struggle with life, rather we learn how to flow with the current of life.

Surrender here should not be understood in a religious or mystical sense. It should be understood as gaining the natural ability to see our condition in life, to accept it and to flow with it. One example of surrender is that if we want to swim in a river then we have to swim with the current. If we try to swim against the current we won't get anywhere. If we allow the current to take us and we swim with the current then we will be able to reach the other shore.

Normally in our life we struggle against the current. An expert swimmer who goes to the riverside doesn't immediately jump into the water but stands on the bank

and observes the flow of the river for some time, sees the currents and the whirlpools, makes a plan for crossing the river and then goes into the water. At least that is how I would do it if I had to cross a river; rather than jumping straight in and then floundering in the middle. That is the aspect of surrender, realization of the situation and acting accordingly, understanding the force of the interaction between an individual and the environment. This is the way to be in tune with the divine will too. So these are the five aspects of sannyasa life, along with discrimination and non-attachment. In the process of sannyasa we try to awaken these different qualities within ourselves and to awaken these different qualities one has to work.

Guru and disciple

In fact people who take sannyasa are not perfect people because sannyasa is a relationship of inner trust between guru and disciple. If people are given sannyasa then they are given sannyasa but the process should not stop there. It is not another label or degree which we display in our house, nor is it membership of a club. The faith that guru places in a disciple is evident when we see that he gives us the sannyasin initiation with the deepest hope that we are able to experience sannyasa. It is like getting the degree before even starting our education. That is only possible in sannyasa. After getting this diploma or degree of sannyasa you have to begin the process of education. This is one of the greatest aspects of the relationship between the teacher and the student.

Sometimes we are fearful that we are surrendering to the guru by taking sannyasa and that we are going to lose our control or identity. These fears are unfounded but we fail to see the trust that the teacher is placing in us. If we can see the trust the teacher places in us then we will appreciate that nature and quality and it will be a source of inspiration for us also. Those people who are sincere in their commitment to sannyasa have to go according to the trust that is placed in them by their guru.

Sannyasa is definitely a method by which we can build up the strengths of our own nature and work to sublimate the energies within. For this some work has to be done within the family environment, some work has to be done in isolation, some work has to be done in the presence of the master and some work has to be done in a community where other people are also following that system of life.

Stages of sannyasa

So, the different levels in sannyasa are, firstly, jignasu which means 'seeker'. In this the disciplines which one has to follow make one aware of one's actions and behaviors, makes one develop the aspect of inner awareness so that there is a greater receptivity and perception in life. There is a code of conduct for people who adopt the Jignasu Sannyasa way of life too; how one must live in the world, in the family and in the ashram and how every moment can be utilized to awaken one's own faculties. This knowledge and acceptance of our lifestyle happens in the first level of sannyasa.

The second level of sannyasa is Karma Sannyasa where, after establishing ourselves in a broad vision of life, we try to harmonize our own actions and we try to renounce our attachments to the results of actions. Thus everything we do is performed with the idea of perfection, and without any expectations, as our own inner dharma. What dharma is you will know later on.

After harmonizing the aspect of action in life we move onto Poorna Sannyasa. This is a different structure of life in which we live the ideals of sannyasa every moment. In the previous two stages one can be in the society, one can live in the family and follow one's commitments, one can work in society and maintain a balance between the external and spiritual life. In Poorna Sannyasa the thought of spiritual life becomes strong, we become scientists, self-scientists, where we begin to experiment with ourselves in order to improve ourselves, and we go as far as we can.

Therefore sannyasa is a natural way of life. One should know very well that it is not becoming part of another

conditioned lifestyle. Though definitely external roles are given and they become the identity of your spiritual life, like Jignasu Sannyasins are given one set of clothes and Poorna Sannyasins are given a dhoti like the one I wear. There are certain things which one has to follow in these lifestyles. Because those people who are interested in working on themselves must adopt a lifestyle in order to give a different meaning to their life, and in order to understand.

It is necessary that we pass through different stages, not that we take Jignasu Sannyasa today, tomorrow we take Karma Sannyasa, and the day after tomorrow Poorna Sannyasa. You should give a minimum time of one year to yourself and I would suggest that if you feel you are not ready then give yourself more time. You have to feel comfortable with yourself. You have to feel comfortable in what you do. You have to feel comfortable in what you believe in and experience, because coming into conflict with anything is not the aim of sannyasa.

What is dharma? How are our social duties determined? What have we to do in order to evolve consciousness? If we do not follow dharma is it detrimental for the consciousness? Are there many ways to follow our dharma?

The literal meaning of the word *dharma* is something which you hold within yourself. Dharma implies an understanding of actions, attitudes and awareness. When attitude and action combined with awareness is performed in the right way, then that is following one's dharma. Actions and attitudes, these are the two key words in understanding dharma, and awareness is the necessary ingredient. When we make food, water and the vegetables have to go together and the fire is the necessary ingredient in order to cook it. Awareness is like the fire, and action and attitude are like the water and the vegetables which we put in the pot of our life.

Dharma also means awareness of one's duties. Dharma means awareness of the natural obligations in relation to our personal life, to the family, to society, to the nation, the world and to the cosmos. It is the ability to perform the right action

with the proper attitude in order to fulfill the duties and obligations which are part of our existence here. Definitely, in order to evolve, in order to experience the subtle dimensions of consciousness, one has to follow dharma. If one does not follow dharma then no form of knowledge nor awakening will be experienced. In fact dharma without awareness, knowledge and experience is incomplete, it will not give experience of consciousness.

The interaction here is happening at the level of dharma. Even the interactions in the family happen at the level of dharma. In order to understand dharma in different levels of society one has to know certain things. What are our obligations and commitments to ourselves, physically, mentally and spiritually? To satisfy the hunger and thirst of the body is the dharma of the body, to satisfy mental aspirations is the dharma of the mind. So dharma means attainment at every level where fulfillment is experienced.

One has to define personal dharmas or duties related to our personal growth. One has to define the family dharmas: to nurture, sustain and support the family. One has to define the social dharma so that we are able to contribute creatively to human society. One also has to define the spiritual dharma. I suggest that you make a list of the duties related to your personal life, the duties related to your family life, the duties related with social life and the duties related with spiritual life. You will get a very clear concept of dharma that way, provided you are able to isolate the aspect of self orientation, provided you are able to remove the aspect of ego, then whatever remains on that paper will be your dharma.

Self oriented awareness, ego orientated desires, these are stages of life in which we try to boost our own self image and we are not able to consider other needs which are equally important and which many times have no connection with our personal desires. Personal desires, ego desires, are the needs of one and dharma is the awareness of the needs of many. Clear? Okay. And sometimes the needs of one are more important than the needs of many.

God and gods and devils; you sometimes use the word God which has been extensively used and misused by the religious. What do you mean exactly when you say God? Second, the word god often admits plural. What are gods for you? Third, those who have gods in their culture also have devils. What can you say about devils? Fourth, from a yogic point of view focused on the perception of man, are these concepts of God or gods and Devil or devils relevant or futile?

This is a very interesting question. The French word 'dieu', the Latin word 'deus' and the Sanskrit word 'deva' actually mean the same thing, the luminous nature of the spirit. In fact it can also be called the spark of life. In yoga there is the concept of two forms of reality. One is changeable and transitory. One is the actual reality which is permanent, which is unchangeable and which is transcendental and which is known as *Ishvara*.

Ishvara does not mean a form of God, rather it represents the state of unchanging transcendental reality. This unchangeable continuous reality has three faculties: generation or creativity; the organization of maintenance or sustenance; destruction or transformation and transmutation. These three qualities are represented in the word God. In English the word God has three letters g-o-d, which stand for generation, organization and destruction. These are the three aspects of the transcendental luminous nature of spirit. This is exactly what I mean when I say God. I don't mean God with form. I haven't even seen God. I don't even know if it is a he or a she, white, brown or black, so I can't have any concept of God.

About the second question, "What are gods for you?", in the plural, I'll tell you one story which has been told in the Upanishads.

Once upon a time there was a war between the gods and the demons, and the gods became victorious. In their victory they went to the heavenly bar and they had an all night party. While they were partying each one was boasting about their power and how many demons each god had killed.

While they were discussing their performance in the war, the supreme god decided to teach them a lesson. So that supreme god appeared in the form of a spirit and asked everyone to show their strength. It placed a piece of straw on the bar table and said, "Show me your strength by using your power to remove this straw from the table."

So the wind god came and he huffed and he puffed but he could not blow away the straw. He became very downcast and left. The fire god came and he used all his strength trying to burn the straw but he couldn't do it. The water god came and he created a deluge but the straw wouldn't move. It was during that deluge that we were inundated. Like this many gods came and tried their power but everyone failed.

Finally the king of the gods came, who is known as Indra, or the corresponding god in the west is Zeus, the lord of thunder storms and lightning. As soon as the king of the gods came in front of the straw, the straw disappeared, the spirit disappeared, and in the place of the spirit there was the manifestation of shakti. The king of the gods asked Shakti, the divine mother, "Where is the spirit?". Shakti said, "You can't see the spirit because all of you are lost in your own egotistical behavior and nature and you have forgotten that your strength comes from that spirit." The manifestation of shakti then gives a very beautiful description of the divine nature to all the gods who were present there.

When we study this Upanishad then we come to know that all the gods whom we have made into religious symbols are nothing but powers and forces of one particular quality. They are the essence of a particular nature and the pure essence of every nature is a luminous state of experience. If we relate it to our own life, the fire god represents the force of vitality, the air god represents the flow of the mind, the king of the gods represents ego. In their pure nature, in their pure aspect, they are considered as gods. In their negative aspects they are considered to be negative aspects of the human personality.

So gods in the plural form represents the essence of a quality. God in the singular represents the unchangeable

transcendental reality. Definitely where there is goodness there is also badness. Day and night are different sides of a coin. The body has a top and a bottom, a process has a beginning and an end. Extremes are the nature of the manifest world. These two extremes are known as positive and negative. The qualities and faculties which manifest on the positive side are the gods and the qualities which manifest on the negative side are the demons. Even in our own life there is a continuous war between gods and demons, between the positive nature and the negative nature. Sometimes the gods win, sometimes the demons win. Don't take them as religious symbols but take them as realities of life.

Karma Yoga, as it is practised in this ashram, allows us to be in very uncomfortable situations and also to experience moments of intense joy and happiness after some time. How can we find such situations again in our daily life? How can we face the tense situations and the battle of wills which is always present in life? How can we face these relationships when we are vulnerable?

I don't have to tell you what happens when an immovable force meets an immovable object. When these two meet together then that is known as karma, but when we add the word yoga to the word karma then there is no clash between these two forces. Normally we find that our actions in life are guided and directed by our likes and dislikes. Since these two are the predominant factors in every action that we perform we involve ourselves with more things that we like and lose our mental strength to handle things that we dislike. When we encounter situations or things that we dislike then there is a very strong rejection, and that rejection represents our weakness or our inability to handle different situations.

In Karma Yoga what we try to do is totally different. We try to develop the strength of mind. I am not speaking of Karma Yoga in the form of work right now, I'm telling you about the aim and meaning of Karma Yoga. In Karma Yoga we try to awaken the strength of our mind so that it can handle different situations with joy and happiness and

not with frustration and anxiety. It is a method by which we change our mental attitude in relation to our desires and actions. We can also say that it is a method by which we gain immunity from the cause and effect of actions. This is something which you should constantly remember. Immunity from the cause and effect of actions is the actual definition of Karma Yoga.

Karma Yoga happens at many levels. It happens at the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and psychic levels. In the *Bhagavad Gita* it has been stated that a person who is a yogi performs the karmas with the idea of attaining inner purification. It is further stated that in this process we need to observe the karmas of the intellect, we need to observe the karmas of the emotion and we need to observe the process of interaction. So interaction, emotion and intellect, these are the three areas where we perform karmas. These are the three areas where we are generally weak and the karma which happens in these three levels manifests in life through the senses and the body.

What do we do in an ashram environment? In an ashram we work with a goal, a goal which helps to focus our strengths, a goal which helps us to overcome our weaknesses. The external form of Karma Yoga is physical work but along with the external form there is also an internal form of Karma Yoga and one has to be aware of this aspect too. Therefore there are times in an ashram environment when we become in tune with our inner Karma Yoga and we find joy, peace and happiness within. If we only identify with the external Karma Yoga then there can be clashes of wills and the clash of wills is the meeting of an immovable force with an immovable object. So, one has to observe the inner process along with the outer process. The same attitude can be developed outside of an ashram environment where we have been working for ourselves without any focus.

In Karma Yoga the first thing that you have to do is give yourself a focus. Do not allow yourself to be disturbed by the weaknesses which manifest. Do not allow yourself to be caught by the pulls of likes and dislikes. Continue to maintain

your inner equilibrium and have the idea of attaining self purification while performing every kind of karma under the sun. This will also give you the ability to observe your own nature and to guide your nature so that it transforms itself into pure awareness. If you can do that you will definitely find situations of joy and happiness in daily life. So you have to learn how to identify with yourself and not with the external situations which create conflict.

What is the psychology of this yoga nidra siesta?

What is the state of being at that time? Relaxation of the body, drowsiness, gradual withdrawal of the senses from outside and a gradual slipping into deep sleep. In that state there is no awareness of where we are, there is no awareness of time and place – except when our neck begins to hurt and then suddenly we become aware of the need to change our body posture. Otherwise everything goes on quite well and there is a feeling of attainment of relaxation. Why do we experience that state of relaxation? Because normally it is the nature of our mind to be active – in that activity of mind why does a sensory disconnection take place? Why at the time of sensory disconnection do we fall into sleep?

Yoga has an opinion on this subject and yogis are very good practitioners of yoga nidra. They are constantly experimenting with that state because it is a very interesting concept that in the normal state of mind there is so much sensory input which is being filtered by certain processes that go on deep in our mind. Some of the things which are relevant to our present condition come to the surface of the mind and we become aware of them and other impressions are stored in the form of memory. There are still other impressions which leave their imprint on the blackboard of the mind but do not form part of any memory. However, they still leave their imprint.

Unconscious impressions

Just as you take a picture with a camera and in the image many things can be seen, so it is with the mind. The only

difference between an ordinary camera and the human mind camera is that with the external camera we can choose the scenery. In our internal camera we can't choose the scenery and our internal camera is working twenty four hours a day. Only when attention is directed to a particular event do we suddenly become aware of the impression within the mind. If the attention is not diverted then impressions contrive to accumulate within. Over such impressions we have no control and this accumulation creates psychological tension.

The human camera works in many different ways. It is not only the visual impressions which come in but the sensations from every sense are registered. As these impressions are being registered and recorded, the level of tension deep inside increases and when the level of tension becomes intolerable then mental tiredness and fatigue are experienced. At that time we unconsciously begin to disassociate from the sensory inputs and we begin to withdraw ourselves. That state of withdrawal is introversion, so when the mind is disconnected and there is no event or experience to hold onto, to help maintain the external awareness, we slip into slumber.

By passing through different stages of slumber there is gradual disconnection of mind from the outer world. In fact we can say that sleep is the natural inbuilt capacity in order to stop the overloading of the brain and mind. If we overload the brain then there is going to be some short circuits inside the brain. If we overload the mind then again there will be some short circuits. So, sleep is the natural process by which we stop this overloading and allow ourselves time to process the information that has been registered and recorded, and to relax the tensions which are created by receiving such information.

The psychology of sleep

Actually the state of sleep is considered to be a state of concentration in yoga. Sleep externally is just sleep but the psychology of sleep is that a disconnection has taken place. That state of disconnection is known as deep concentration. In fact we can even call it a meditative state of mind in

which we are experiencing another dimension of ourselves. In this experience we are observing another event which is not related with the outer world, which is not related to the environment, which is not related with the thoughts and desires of day to day life but where the entire energy is spent in processing whatever has been stored inside.

Now we need to look into these levels of concentration in order to understand the similarity between sleep and meditation. These two stages are very similar but the difference is that in sleep we have lost control of the awareness, whereas in the meditative state of *dhyana* we hold onto our awareness and go deep into our unconscious mind.

Modern psychology speaks of three states of mind: the conscious, the subconscious, the unconscious. Yoga speaks of four mental stages which, translated into English, mean something similar to conscious, subconscious and unconscious and one stage more which is *turiya*, superconsciousness.

Raja Yoga: external and internal experience

In the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali the yogic practices have been defined in eight different stages. Yama, niyama, asana and pranayama are the first external four stages. The remaining four deal with inner experiences or inner states of consciousness.

The first two stages of yoga, yama and niyama, deal with the external interaction and behavior of a person and try to change the attitudes of an individual so we are able to experience the freedom of our inner nature. The next two stages, asana and pranayama, try to harmonize the energies of the body so that the sensory inputs are channelled and do not create unconscious tensions.

Pratyahara

The practices then begin to observe the different levels of the mind. Pratyahara is the fifth stage of Raja Yoga and the meaning of the word is withdrawing the senses. This is the common meaning which we know but it also means feeding the inner sense. The description of pratyahara is that we

must be able to withdraw the sense inside just as a turtle is able to withdraw its limbs into its shell. If we look carefully at this description of the turtle then let us see how many limbs of the turtle are outside its shell: two arms, two legs and one tail which represent the five senses, and one head which represents the mind.

It is withdrawing these six senses inside which is the state of pratyahara but before you actually begin to withdraw them inside you need first to become aware of what is outside. It is not easy to withdraw something inside which we don't know exists. Therefore, initially we have to become aware of what exists and then we go through the process of learning how to pull their energies, which are normally manifesting outside, back inside. The psychological aspect of yoga begins with pratyahara. The nature of the mind is to be continuously active. Normally, when we try to enter into meditation our first effort is in subduing or suppressing the mind or the mental activity and therefore initially we have to struggle.

There is one story. Once upon a time there lived a king who received a gift of some beautiful wild horses. Nobody in the kingdom knew how to tame them so the king made an announcement throughout his land that he was searching for people to train his horses and whoever could do it would receive a big reward. Many people came and each one tried to saddle a horse and each one tried to bridle a horse at the very first instance. The horses were not trained to accept commands and of course they did not accept anyone riding on their backs. After lots of struggle it was the people who usually came down and the horses would remain on top, and many people found that their arms and legs were broken.

One day a person came to the king and said, "Let me try". By this time the king was quite desperate so he said, "If you can train them I'll give you half my kingdom!" Kings are funny people, for a few horses he was willing to give up half his kingdom! So the man said, "I will train them in my own environment without any interference from anyone. I wish to take the horses away, I want one year's time and after one

year I'll bring the horses back to you." The king accepted the conditions and the man took away the horses.

After one year the entire nation was out on the road to see if this person had been able to train the wild horses. Right at the appointed hour, all in one line came the six beautiful horses with a person riding on the foremost one. The people had absolutely no idea of how the wild horses had been trained, but they were very happy to see the result. The king asked the trainer, "How did you do it?"

The trainer explained that he began by observing the horses. When the horses ran, he would run behind them. When the horses stopped for a drink he would make his coffee. When the horses ate grass he would have his bread, butter and jam. Slowly he made friends with the horses. One day he touched them. Initially the horses shied away from his touch but later on they became used to it, then one day he put a saddle on them. The horses did not like it but they became used to it. He was able to do all this because he became the friend of the horses.

This is the exact process that yoga applies with the mind. Normally we do not make the mind our friend, rather we try to suppress and subdue the mental activities. If we say we will meditate now, everyone will sit down very quietly and firmly and try to stop the mental activities, and will get disturbed if the mental activities do not stop. Nobody will think to follow the mind's mental activities.

In pratyahara we try to make friends with the mind by observing the normal functions and activities, by observing how far the mind can extend itself and how it reacts to different situations and circumstances. In this way we slowly gain a deeper understanding of the mind. After understanding is gained, then we try to direct the energies of the mind towards a definite goal and aim.

Dharana

The mind is like a bulb. When it is on the light spreads everywhere, and the energy or power of the mind is dissipated. The purpose of concentration is to focus the energies of the

mind. Just imagine, if we focus the light coming from a bulb into one point, then it takes the form of a laser beam. A laser beam can cut through steel. It can also burn a very sensitive part of the body without damaging any other part. I have seen operations on the human eye using a laser beam. It is an incredible thing to observe how that simple point of light can remove blockages from different blood vessels and nerves and yet hold the immense possibility of cutting steel in half. That is how the mind eventually becomes after we have gone through a process of focusing our mental energies through dharana, but in order to come to this stage we have to begin with the basics. We have to make friends with the mind.

In pratyahara we observe the extension of the mind outside, and the interaction of the mind with the outer world. When we see how the senses influence and affect different mental states, how the thoughts interact, and how the desires influence our performance, then gradually we begin to concentrate our mind. As the process of centering our attention begins then we move from pratyahara into another level of concentration which is slightly deeper than the previous one. This level is known as dharana, learning to focus the mind into one point.

In the state of dharana the first level attained is relaxation which is physical and mental in nature. If we look at the practice of yoga nidra itself we shall see that in one practice we move from the level of pratyahara to dharana. When we begin our normal practice of yoga nidra we first extend our awareness to the body, the environment and we observe the external conditions which exist. Then, we forget about the external conditions and rapidly begin to create mental images during the process of visualization. During the formation of mental images we are not aware of the external environment but we are bringing to the surface of the mind stored impressions which are contained within.

Memory also has a double role to play. Some memories are charged with emotional force and some memories are charged with normal rational thought. In our own life we find it easier to remember events which contain some aspect

of emotional stimulation. We can relive those moments much more easily than other states or experiences in life which do not contain that emotional stimulation. It is the stimulation of mind which is important here and, initially through rapid imagery, we create a balanced emotional release so that their influence does not affect the normal mental condition.

Don't ask me how it works but I've seen a lot of people being affected in the practices of yoga nidra by some emotional changes which can come in the form of fear or in the form of intense happiness. I have seen people suddenly get up in the middle of the practice because some impression is coming up inside and they are not able to analyze it and they feel uncomfortable. I have seen other people who have the ability to manage all situations by going into the state of yoga nidra.

Just to give you an example, I know a lady in Belfast, Ireland who used to say, "Yoga nidra is the best yoga I have come across because in that, anything I desire is fulfilled." Every week she would change her sankalpa. If she wanted money, she would receive it from unexpected sources. If she wanted some other thing she would receive that from the most unexpected source. Of course she was the object of jealousy from many people. People used to think, "How can she attain it and we have been trying for so long and we still can't do anything?" But the fact remains that with sensitivity of mind in the state of dharana the mental forces come together and they have the ability to change the environment and we derive the benefit.

So these are some stages of mental concentration through which we can pass in the course of our meditation practice. Through them we can gain knowledge of the totality of mind so that we are able to handle different mental upheavals, disturbances and distractions which happen on very superficial and very deep levels. After knowing how to handle the mind it becomes possible to release the mental forces. The release of mental forces has one aim, to make the practitioner aware of other dimensions of existence so that the process of attaining perfection can continue.

Applied Yoga

Our time together is slowly coming to an end and truly we have not actually started, but a beginning has been made and I would like to tell you in brief what is happening in India in relation to yoga and our guru Paramahansa Satyananda. Most of you know that Paramahansa Satyananda physically left the ashram in 1988. The reasons for his leaving and renouncing the ashram are very simple. In the life of a sannyasin there comes a time when, after exhausting all our samskaras and ambitions, we need to again follow the direction for which originally we had taken sannyasa.

Paramahamsaji and sannyasa

I don't know why you might be interested in taking sannyasa but when Paramahamsaji took sannyasa in 1943 his aim was to discover the nature which the saints and yogis have talked about and for which he already had an inner feeling. From an early age he had some inner awakenings and he wanted to experience spirituality in life. It was these inner spiritual experiences which made him search for his guru in the form of Swami Sivananda.

When he was being initiated into sannyasa, Swami Sivananda told him that it was necessary to first exhaust all the desires and ambitions and to be free from attachments and samskaras. In order to creatively direct the energies, he needed to dedicate himself in selfless service to humanity without thinking of some form of personal gain. Paramahamsaji asked

Swami Sivananda how he would know when he had overcome his ambitions and samskaras. Swami Sivananda told him that in the course of his sadhana attachments and attractions to external fulfillments would gradually become less. In fact this is one of the symptoms that we find in a person who is truly on his path. As one slowly overcomes the ego and desires, the need to accumulate and to be part of human society in the normal sense gradually changes and is channelled. There is a greater feeling for the inner experience.

The mission of yoga

This is what happened in Paramahamsaji's life. He worked selflessly, bringing the teachings of yoga to everyone and for many he became their teacher, their guru, for many he became the administrator of the ashram. However, he always maintained his vision that he had not adopted the sannyasa lifestyle in order to become a guru, in order to establish ashrams and again become caught in the illusions of the world. In fact we find such a spirit in very few people. We find that many people again become caught up in the power which they gain and they lose the vision of wisdom and knowledge which makes them come in tune with themselves.

In spiritual life, power and wisdom are the two things we gain but we tend to ignore the wisdom and go for power. That is the beginning of our downfall. In Paramahamsaji's life we see the application of wisdom and the ability to remain unaffected by power. With this attitude he worked tirelessly to spread the knowledge of yoga, and definitely we have to recognize the contribution to yoga which he has made. Then there came a time in his life when he knew that he had overcome the samskaras, that his spirit was not bound to the earthly dimension and that he was free to pursue the direction for which he had originally taken sannyasa.

In 1988 he left everything that he had created and took the form of a wandering sannyasi. That was an incredible sight to see. A person who had created a revolution in the world of yoga, a person who had established one of the most respected institutions of yoga, and was a guide to thousands

of people throughout the world, just leaving the gate of the ashram with only two pieces of dhoti, like a visitor who had come to visit the ashram for some time and after the duration of his stay was leaving the place.

Paramahamsaji's new lifestyle

For a few years he wandered throughout India, waiting for the next inspiration to guide him. He got the inspiration in the western part of India and his future life became clear to him. Then he came and settled in a village which is one of the poorest and most deprived regions in India. There the Bihar School of Yoga purchased some property, made a small hut for him and he lives there in isolation, not seeing anybody, just involved in his own sadhana.

If you came to know of his lifestyle, you would be surprised to see the austere lifestyle that he leads. He has stopped wearing clothes and just wears an ordinary loincloth. He stays like that throughout the year, from the hottest summer to the coolest winter and he stays out in the open. He sleeps under the stars on the floor without any covering on the body. He says, "Previously I was a five star swami but now I am an infinite star swami."

The method of his sadhana has also changed. Apart from the yoga which is the basis of sadhana, many more austere sadhanas are performed, including some sadhanas which have only been done three or four times in the entire human history. One of them is the sadhana of five fires. That happens during the summer months. Four fires are lit around his body and the fifth fire is the sun in heaven. He sits in the middle of those fires for eight hours every day, lost in contemplation, in temperatures which range between 70 and 80 degrees Celsius. His whole body gets burned like molten copper. This is just one form of the sadhana which he does.

While reading the traditional books on the subject, I came across a passage which said that only those people who have overcome their passions, who have overcome their aggression, their attachments and their desires, in short, who

have controlled the five fires internally, gain the ability to control the external fires. Only siddhas of the highest calibre can obtain this ability to control the natural elements. This is what we see happening in the life of Paramahamsaji. If we observe his lifestyle we also notice something else. He has always followed the system without jumping stages. To do what he is doing now he waited seventy years. Only at the age of seventy did he renounce the ashram. Normally seventy is the age when we look for security and comfort in life. It is very difficult to start again at that stage but he followed the inner call and at the age of seventy he established himself in this path of sadhana.

It is not always that he opens his door and invites people to come and be with him. In fact in the last five years it is the first invitation which he has extended to everyone who can, to come and visit him in the month spanning November and December. After that he is again going to withdraw himself and possibly not see anyone for quite a few years.

An enduring inspiration

In 1992, in order to celebrate his fiftieth year of renunciation, we conducted an International Yoga Convention in Munger. For four days we were all together celebrating the spirit of yoga and discovering the new dimensions of yoga. In that convention many eminent doctors and scientists, spiritual personalities and educationalists all came to participate. Forty years ago Paramahamsaji said that people of every race and community would find shelter under the umbrella of yoga, and we saw that prophesy of Paramahamsaji coming true.

One aspect of Paramahamsaji which manifested during the convention was his ability of still considering himself as a disciple. We had asked him for a message to send to the convention. He sent us a message which has been printed, "I still remember the day when I found shelter and when I surrendered myself to my guru, Swami Sivananda, and that moment is the most cherished and precious moment of my life." It is in this statement that we see his mind, because

normally beginning is never important to us, it is always the end result which becomes important.

We go to school, we become educated and our aim is to gain a diploma or a degree. We are continuously waiting for the day when we can get our certificate and complete our education, and with pride show everyone the certificate. We are concerned with our attainments, but in the life of Paramahamsaji we see a different thing altogether. He is not concerned with attainment, rather he appreciates the moment when he actually began his work. He has continuously maintained that moment of inspiration which brought him to this path. That moment of inspiration is the most important thing. That becomes the guiding force in life and many times in our attainment we tend to lose that concept. The inspiration is lost, we feel – now what to do?

It is important in the life of an individual to maintain and cherish that inspiration and, with that inspiration alive, to continue to work, evolve and serve. This is the basic and most important sadhana of an individual who is true to life.

Diwali, the Festival of Light

There is a special celebration which in India is known as the Festival of Light, *Diwali*. There is a tradition, on the day prior to the festival, of burning a huge bonfire which represents the power of light over darkness. During this Festival of Light candles burn in every household and there are still some areas of India where the candles turn night into day. If you ever happen to fly in an aeroplane during this celebration, or even if you go to the top of a tall building, then you see the entire land covered with tiny, tiny shining lights.

Diwali is very auspicious also because the mythology says that *Lakshmi*, the goddess of wealth, prosperity and happiness, walks through the land showering her blessings on everyone. So let us make a sankalpa to light one little candle. Outside one can light a candle at any time, but it is inside that we have to try to light up. If you study Kundalini Yoga you will see that inside us there is an eternal lamp which is continually burning in our heart. That eternal lamp is symbolized in the

image of anahata chakra. It is that lamp which we have to discover within ourselves so we can allow the light to radiate. Then there will be a true celebration of light in this life.

Be like a child

The young ones represent the force that can light that lamp inside, so you have to be like them. Even in the Bible it is said that in order to enter the kingdom of heaven one should be like a child. A child represents simplicity and purity of heart and it is that child which we have to discover within, in the form of innocence, simplicity, and a natural ability to mould ourselves into any condition or any situation.

That child nature represents the removal of the veil of ignorance. In fact many times I feel that knowledge is the greater ignorance in life because the knowledge which we apply in life is conditioned knowledge and it restricts our perception, it restricts our expression and it restricts our interaction. So what is the use of gaining knowledge which does not allow the purity of life to manifest? In order to experience purity of heart, in order to experience and realize the source of light within, one should become simple, sincere and innocent, not externally but definitely internally.

Externally you have to fulfill the dharma and you have to adjust yourself according to the situation but definitely internally you can be yourself without any exhibition or condition. Exhibition of knowledge expresses the ego nature of the self, and the conditionings of the mind restrict our ability to interact in a proper way and limit our creativity. So, being natural means being yourself.

Freedom from conditioning

In yoga, mind is described in two ways, one as the pure, the other as the impure mind. The impure mind is what is manifested and is subject to the influence of ego, desires and the different existing conditions in life. The main form of expression of the impure mind is reaction. It reacts continuously and constantly. We have to try to attain the pure mind through our involvement in yoga. Pure mind

here means one which is unaffected by the situations, the environment, the existing conditions, where the ego is channelled, the desires are transformed and the awakening of the energy is felt. This leads to the knowledge and perception of the awakened mind.

The main aspects of the pure mind are simplicity and innocence, the ability to flow with life, the use of the power of discrimination and the unconditioned expression of human nature. In this way even the feelings of love, compassion and affection become universal feelings and do not remain confined to the self only. Transforming the normal feelings into universal feelings should be our aim when we practise yoga and this unconditioned nature is experienced when we are able to get in touch with our hearts. We have conditioned ourselves to think and act from the head. The space where continuous activity takes place within us is the head region, we have not used the strength and the space and the quality of our heart at all.

So the parting shot today is, let us become more aware of our heart and experience that light deep inside our own being which can remove any kind of darkness from our life.

The Four Qualities of Mind

There are some question here and I will try to answer them in one continuation. Some are related with anxieties and fears, some with the practices of yoga. One thing which we must understand is that anxiety and fear are a part of our life. In yoga we recognize four types of instincts which dominate our life process: sexual desire, *maithuna*; fears and insecurities, *bhaya*; desire for status in life, *ahara*; and sensory disconnection from the outer world, *nidra*. These instincts represent a gradual transformation in the field of our consciousness.

Recognizing the instincts

Let us look at these four instincts briefly and then we shall understand the role of anxiety in our life because anxiety as such is not a bad thing. It gives us an opportunity to realize our weaknesses and also it provides us with an opportunity to evolve and develop our strengths. Of course one has to realize the quality of anxieties and fears, then by changing the quality of their expression we can change our life.

A knife, when used to kill other people represents a tamasic quality. A knife which is used to cut the vegetables up and prepare food represents the rajasic quality of sustenance. The same knife which is used to save others on an operating table represents the sattwic quality. The knife is one but the applications are different. When the application is to harm another person it represents the tamasic nature, when the

application is to fulfill personal ambitions and desires then it is the rajasic nature and when it is applied to help others evolve in their own life it is the sattwic nature.

To act is one but there are three aspects of an action. In the same way there are three aspects to every life process. We have to look at these anxieties and fears which are normal manifestations in our life. We have to look at the positive aspects of life which manifest in our day to day activities also from a different viewpoint. Changing attitudes and outlook is important and necessary in yoga, and this can only happen when you are aware of the quality manifesting in your life.

The first instinct, the sexual instinct, is the urge of becoming many from being one. It represents a process of multiplication and nobody is free from it. We identify with the sexual act either in a rajasic or a tamasic way but there is a positive quality to it also, where this instinct can be used to become a force for gaining higher understanding of the human consciousness. The methods are described in some systems of Tantra; how to convert the passions into a positive force where you are able to overcome possessiveness, where you are able to overcome emotional attractions and attachments. Also where you feel that force as a transcendental force with the capacity to change the human consciousness from being confined to a world of pleasure and matter to experiencing a subtle awakened state of inner being.

The second instinct is fear, it also represents insecurities, and normally fear is of the unknown. What is known cannot create inner fear but what is not known can definitely create insecurities and fears. These fears represent the need of self preservation too. Insecurities or fears tend to disturb the natural state of our personality. In times of fear our whole mentality becomes very rajasic, self oriented. We try to preserve our conditions, our nature and our thoughts. We hold onto things that we hold dear in life and there is rejection of anything new coming in which might change the normal life process.

Whether fears and insecurities are external or internal, whatever may be their form, they represent conditioning in life, and anything which changes that conditioned nature creates inner disturbance. Such expressions of anxiety or fear are natural in life. We have not yet evolved our consciousness or awareness so we can be aware of the other factors in life. Because of this lack of awakening we find ourselves surrounded by moments of anxiety and frustration. Insecurities and fears which manifest in external life, alter our emotional perceptions and intensify our own understanding and beliefs. Generally aggression is associated with such experiences.

If there is anxiety there is bound to be aggression too. If there is fear, deep behind it there is aggression. In the same way, if there is insecurity, deep behind it is the same aggression which is the manifest nature of the instinct of fear. Yoga tries to manage it through the practice of concentration and meditation which gives one the ability to observe and use the faculties and powers of discrimination to avoid inner imbalance.

The best way to manage anxiety and fear is to develop an understanding and awareness of life which can begin with the practices of relaxation, can be developed in the practices of concentration and can be lived in the state of meditation. If we follow this system then management of anxieties, fears and insecurities is quite easy. We feel disturbed because we don't know the way to manage or handle such situations and we get too caught in the pulls of our mind and ego. We feel ourselves unable to awaken understanding in our life.

Understanding is one of the greatest qualities that we can develop in life. In fact if you ask me what one quality we should have in life, then I would only say understanding because for me that is the essence of our life. That is the source of all creativity in life and it is understanding which one develops in the state of meditation.

The third instinct is craving, the desire for satisfaction. We are searching for satisfaction every moment of our life. We seek emotional satisfaction, sensorial satisfaction,

intellectual satisfaction, spiritual satisfaction. In fact our whole life revolves around the desire to attain satisfaction. This is definitely an instinct which dominates the conscious, the subconscious and the unconscious activities in our life.

Becoming aware of our desires and changing the quality of our desires from negative to positive, combined with the aspects of understanding and awareness can change desires into a very strong force which can open our eyes to other realities in life. Nobody should try to become free from desires because desires are something which we all have. Even in the highest state of realization the same desire exists but instead of increasing the number of desires we learn to reduce them. Instead of being involved with the desires which dominate our life instinctively, we can create desires in order to guide our actions in life. So, desires are subtle forces of consciousness which can be changed and sublimated in order to attain perfection and harmony in life.

The fourth instinct is sleep and that is the natural ability to disconnect from the sensory overload, which I spoke of yesterday.

Sadhana

Ultimately we come to the basic principles of yoga, that whatever practice we do we need to evolve the capacity of observation and we need to develop the ability to understand ourselves. With these two things we can manage the instincts, therefore yoga has always been a method of attaining awareness, alertness in life.

In relation to the practice of yoga the *Yoga Sutras* say practise becomes perfect when there is regularity, continuity, and inner faith and trust for the things that we adopt as our sadhana. Regularity, continuity and trust, these are the three important ingredients of sadhana. Many times we see that people who practise yoga initially feel good about their practise but as they continue they don't have the same experiences and they get disheartened. They begin to think, "Previously I used to have such and such experience, now I don't have any." This is a process of habituation.

In psychology we come across the theory of habituation. The process of habituation can be described in the following way. A person who doesn't smoke enters a room which is full of cigarette smoke. In the first few moments the smell is very strong and irritating but after five minutes what happens? After ten minutes what happens? The smell is there but it doesn't bother you any more, you have become habituated to the smell.

Similar things happen in yoga practice too. When you start something new there is a feeling of happiness, there is a feeling of looking forward to something and the new practices begin to change your perceptions. They sensitize your awareness and you feel and see different things. This state continues for some time. After a couple of months, three months, six months, one year, as you become habituated to the practices and the change that has taken place within you, the expectation of the practice and the experience gained from the practice are not seen with the same vision. Different expectations arise. That happens even in marital life. At first we are madly and deeply and truly in love and after some time the charm evaporates. Why did this happen? Our expectations changed, vision changed, understanding changed, and now we want something different.

Applying the new awareness

Therefore in yoga it is necessary to keep a straight head. From the beginning yoga emphasizes four things. Become aware of your strengths, the qualities which manifest naturally in your life and with which you are comfortable. Then become aware of your weaknesses which inhibit the expression of your nature: fear of something or somebody, lack of will power, motivation and drive, or a flirting mind which is forever jumping from one thing to the next and does not allow fixation and flowering of the mind to take place. I would suggest very strongly that you make a list of your strengths and weaknesses, an objective list. Don't feel bad about writing your weaknesses on a piece of paper, you don't have to display it but you should write it down in order to know they exist within.

Try to work with them. Try to change them, overcome them and build up your strengths. The third thing is ambitions, which are practical and impractical. Become aware of them and see which are necessary for you. In the same way observe your needs.

If we can develop awareness of these four things in life then we can never become dissatisfied with sadhana, and sadhana becomes a continuous process of growth. In order to perfect the sadhana we should maintain regularity, we should maintain continuity and we should have faith and trust in the process which we have adopted, and by which we can improve ourselves.

Karma and Destiny

I have been given the topic, 'Karma and Destiny', which is a very complicated and difficult subject. First we will look at the concept of the human personality which has evolved in the Indian tradition, then in relation to those thoughts we shall see how karma and destiny effect an individual.

I cannot say that I know the subject very well, because to think about and to experience karma and destiny is a life-long process, beyond human comprehension. Many attempts have been made in the past to describe the process of karma and destiny which governs human life, nature and personality. Rather than a philosophical approach to the subject, we should try to see the relevance of karma and destiny in normal human life and see how our personality integrates itself with karma and destiny.

The thinkers of the past have defined the interactions of a human being in five different dimensions simultaneously. These five dimensions represent the progression of our life from gross or manifest to subtle to transcendental. A human being does not live only on the material plane, but at a deeper level also one interacts with the subtle levels of life and one has the inbuilt capacity to realize the transcendental nature of life. Until we can see these three aspects of life together, we will not be able to understand or appreciate the theory of karma and destiny.

Five dimensions of human personality

So first let us look at the different aspects of human personality, or at the different dimensions in which a human being interacts, whether consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously. Each level of interaction in life is a state of higher awareness.

The first level of human interaction is in the material dimension, where our body and senses become the tool to interact in the world of name, form and object. The concept of name, form and object in relation to the world of matter is important, because only in the manifest dimension do we have the ability to recognize a form, to give that form or object a name and to interact with objects which are in our environment. These objects are different manifestations of matter, and matter can take different forms as animate or inanimate objects. This level of interaction, which influences the performance of our body and stimulates the senses, is the dimension of matter.

The second dimension is the mind which is the next subtle level. What is mind?. Many different ideas have been conveyed, whether in the East or the West, to describe the process of mind, the condition of mind. They are all incomplete because mind is definitely a very big subject. It is not confined to the experience or realization of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious faculties only. It incorporates the aspects, manifestations and interactions of ego, the understanding and the experience of intellect and emotions and aspects of rationality and irrationality. It is a force which can interact with the manifest world and the unmanifest dimension. It can recognize symbols and it can also feel the non-existent conditions of life. It creates thoughts, desires and ambitions.

The various mental creations act differently when they are combined with our life, and even more so, with our lifestyle. Our mode of mental expression is through conditioning. Our mind is conditioned to act according to the education that it receives from society, the family and the culture. It defines specific parameters within which it functions.

So, in the ancient traditions a lot of thought has been given to the functioning of the mind and the nature of the mind. In broad terms, four aspects have been identified. The first important aspect is ego; the second aspect is intellect, rationality; the third aspect is emotions and feelings, and the fourth aspect is the faculty of cognition. These four aspects of mind change their behavior in different conditions and circumstances in life. This change within the mental frame is known, in normal language, as 'moods of the mind'.

In brief, this is the mental dimension in which human beings interact regularly, and an imbalance in the mental structure can affect the entire personality. I call such an imbalance an overload of the mental structure and at the time of an overload there is mental breakdown. This mental breakdown is experienced in the form of tension and stress, in the form of anxiety and an unclear mind. These limiting conditions of mind also restrict our creativity but at the same time the mind has an immense potential to evolve. We can say that it is in a process of continuous evolution.

The third dimension of human personality is the dimension of energy. This aspect of human personality has to be given more recognition and it should be understood because in our life we interact more at the energy level than at the rational or conscious levels. The energy experiences are translated by the second dimension, the mind, in the form of feeling, sensations, subtle feelings of attainment, happiness and contentment. Any disturbance in the energy structure can also be felt by an individual. If somebody feels fear, if someone is aggressive, if someone is at peace, if someone is experiencing harmony, then we can also feel it. All this happens at a non-rational, non-intellectual level where we communicate with the subtle aspect and nature of energy. There is a continuous interaction with the dimension of energy, but we are not conscious of this process.

The fourth dimension of interaction is the dimension of wisdom. This is an even more subtle level than those of the mind, the energy or the body. Wisdom is not to be seen as knowledge. Knowledge can be a conditioned factor, it can also

provide the mind with a definite vision. We very rarely utilize the knowledge we have, more often we utilize the ability of instinctive interaction and the aspect of knowledge simply remains an intellectual process. Therefore, wisdom is the fourth dimension of human personality, where knowledge is applied in our life and becomes a living experience. When knowledge becomes a living experience, or when one lives the knowledge every moment, then that state is known as wisdom. In this state of wisdom, the faculties of discrimination are most active and there is total harmony between the different aspects of human nature. In this dimension of wisdom, knowledge is applied in life and knowledge is lived in life, and for that one needs to train oneself.

The fifth dimension of human personality is the dimension of fulfillment, contentment, joy and happiness. It is at this level that human creativity manifests, that a total positive and creative expression of human nature takes place. One experiences inner freedom beyond the conditionings of mind and life, one experiences total creativity, one experiences perfection and fulfillment.

Karma

We interact in these five dimensions simultaneously. Now, the process of interaction in life happens through the concept or the aspect of karma. What is karma? The literal meaning of the word *karma* is action. This word has been used in many different ways to define the levels of human interaction, the nature which is manifesting in one's life.

Today this word karma is used to describe human inability. When we find difficult situations in life that we cannot face, then we say, "Oh, it's my karma." When we find that we do not have the strength and guts to face a certain situation, we say, "I can't help it, it's my karma." Karma today has become a word which describes human inability to face the circumstances and situations in life, but this concept or definition of karma is absolutely false and wrong.

Karma means action and every action will have a result. Clapping the hands is an action, but the sound which comes

out is the effect of that action. So the theory of cause and effect has also been associated with the theory of karma. If we consider cause and effect to be the correct definition of karma I think we are one step closer to understanding the nature of karma, because an effect is the result of an interaction. An effect is the result of a cause which is action. An effect cannot exist without action or without cause. There is a continuous cycle of cause and effect of karma which is happening around us in the world, in the cosmos.

If we consider karma to be action and interaction, then it is being performed by us at all levels of human personality. In the *Bhagavad Gita* it has been stated that in normal life a human being performs karmas by speech, by mind and by intellect. Speech here does not mean verbal speech, where I am speaking and you are listening, but the process of interaction between two people, the transmission of behavior, thought, and attitude. This transmission which happens between two people creates karmas. It happens through rationality too. Our intellect, which is conditioned to act and to behave in a certain way, is the cause of motivating our physical actions, the cause of directing our efforts to gain something, the cause of obtaining pleasures for self-satisfaction.

We are all looking for self-satisfaction in life. The main drive of our life is the search for fulfillment, happiness and joy. It is a self oriented search, and also a form of karma. When this karma interacts with the unmanifest areas of human nature, then certain impressions are created in the deeper mind. These impressions create another conditioning in the mind. After all, actions are static in life. The action which I perform today, here and now, will remain today, here and now. I cannot repeat today's actions tomorrow but, the result of that action can be felt even ten years in the future.

For example, karma is a static force. It is like a rose in the garden. The effect of that karma is the continuing force, like the smell of the rose. Depending on which way the wind is blowing, you can smell the rose quite far away. You do not have to stick your nose in the rose, you can just get a whiff

from the wind. Smell is the quality of a rose. In the same way karma is a static event in life, and the effect of the karma is a moving experience in life which can leave its impressions on the human mind for a long time to come.

A common example is when we fight with somebody and carry the animosity in our mind and heart for years together. Why does that happen? The fight happened five years ago, but the impression of that fight has affected our basic instincts in life, has affected our ego and self oriented awareness, has disrupted the harmony of our personality. It is carried with us until the end of our days.

Becoming a super-human being

In order to remove this impression it becomes necessary to wipe clean the mental blackboard, but who has this ability? In my opinion, a true human being must have that ability. This ability to wipe clean the mental blackboard, to clear out the impressions of the karmas and stop them from affecting our nature in a negative way, is the quality which can turn a human being into a super-human being.

If you want to be aware of something in relation to karma, then I would strongly recommend that you observe the effect of an action in normal life and try to manage that. If you can handle the effects of karma in normal life, then it will be much easier to make life happier and definitely more harmonious. However one has to understand that the depth of that karma can be felt at the conscious level, at the subconscious level and also at the unconscious level. When it is felt in the conscious level it changes the behavior pattern. If I like somebody, I like that person. If I don't like somebody, I totally dislike that person. At the conscious level there is an immediate reaction of the karma which manifests in the form of attraction or repulsion. At the subconscious level, the effect of karma changes the attributes of life. The attributes of life are mental clarity, proper utilization of our human strengths, and proper understanding of life's situations. In my opinion these are the three main attributes of human life, provided we are able to use them to develop ourselves.

The effect of a karma at the unconscious level affects the ego dimension. When the ego is somehow touched, then it becomes very difficult to handle that karma. That is the detrimental side of the karmic effect, the law of cause and effect. When the ego is touched by a karma, then that state is similar to the roots of a tree being eaten by parasites. When the roots are eaten then the tree becomes totally weak. This is one thing which we must avoid at all costs. This can happen. It is possible to avoid the negative effects of the karmas and it can happen through the process of meditation in which we first observe ourselves, our reactions, our tendencies or strengths and weaknesses, and manage them properly.

Human strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs

There is a concept of human strength, human weakness, human ambition and of human need which I would like to tell you about. We all have certain strengths within us. We all have certain qualities within us. Whatever form they may take externally does not matter. The strength can be willpower, clear thinking, love and compassion, anything that can be applied positively and constructively in life, and which helps you to evolve and helps others to evolve. The strength supports your own growth and it supports the growth of other people with whom you come in contact, but these strengths are overshadowed sometimes by our weaknesses.

Weaknesses can take different forms such as lack of willpower, lack of mental clarity, an inferiority complex, loss of self-image, nervousness and tension, and inability to manage stress levels in life. There can be a million forms of human weakness. These weaknesses overshadow the strengths, or the positive aspects of our life. Most of the time we are influenced by these weaknesses and try to hide them. So the struggle in our life is against the weaknesses.

We do not want to be weak but at the same time we do not have an awareness of our strengths. If there is an awareness of our strengths, then it is a philosophical concept only. If there is an awareness of our positive qualities, then it is an intellectual concept only. Very rarely do we actually apply

them constructively to overcome our weaknesses. And if we do try to apply them without proper application of knowledge, then this takes the form of aggression and stubbornness. These are two areas where we move from time to time in our normal life.

Now, when karmas are performed by us, depending on their nature, they influence either the strength aspect or the weakness aspect of our life. If the weakness is affected, then it is very difficult to remove that impression from the mind. It touches the deepest core of our personality. If the strength is touched by the karmas, then we move through the karmas with a very positive attitude.

The third aspect is ambition. We all have our aspirations and ambitions in life, whether they are for status or for external security. Ambitions can be of any kind. Sometimes they are unrealistic too. Ambitions are the driving force of our actions. If you separate ambition from karma, then karma will always have a positive influence on life but if the ambitions are linked with karmas, then there is going to be a negative reaction also. This is because in ambition there is very little understanding of the conditions and circumstances. There is very little understanding of a proper interaction between two people. I do not have to define negative ambitions to you; definitely we can make an effort to change those negative ambitions into positive ones, and in that way, learn to manage our karmas better.

The fourth aspect is human need. The body has certain needs, such as food. The family has certain needs. There are certain social needs, mental, personal, and emotional needs and we all try to fulfill those needs to the best of our ability. Actions which we perform daily through the senses, the mind and the emotions, move in these four different areas of strength, weakness, ambition and need. Depending on which area of personality or human nature they come into contact with, they create an impression in our psyche. I have used the word, 'psyche' not mind. The psyche is the deeper aspect of the human mind, which interacts at a powerful, non-rational level.

Destiny

People sometimes confuse karma with destiny. I have often come across statements about it such as, “A person can make his own destiny”, “One cannot control one’s destiny.” So here we find some contradiction. Why is there this contradiction? This is something which I have not been able to understand because I come from a tradition that believes one can make and create one’s own destiny. Of course, we have to work very hard to do that. It is a process of educating the self. You cannot get a degree or a diploma just by thinking about it. You have to study, work hard, you have to pass, and then you get the degree or diploma. In the same way, you cannot change destiny just by thinking about it. In order to change destiny you have to work very, very hard and pass the exam. It is in this context that we have to understand what destiny is.

Destiny has two forms: one which is controlled by a human being and another which is controlled by a superior force which is non-human. In life your destiny can be controlled by you, and it is the destiny of life with which we are concerned; but there is a process beyond life too. We cannot control our birth, or our death. There is no knowledge of when we are going to die. It can happen at any time, in one year’s time or after a hundred years. We don’t know that, but the destiny of this visible aspect of life which we live every day can be controlled.

Somehow I get the impression that destiny is like a stake in the ground. Well, let us look at the example of a goat which is tied to a string. The string is tied to a post in the ground. That rope is ten meters long. Now that goat has the ability to move ten meters or five meters or one meter from the central pole to which it is tied. It also has the ability to go around and around the post and tie itself up more and more but, if it tries to go beyond the ten meters of rope, then it is also going to kill itself because the rope is not going to allow more space than has been assigned. So, here we see the two aspects of destiny. The pole is that superior force of life. Some people may call it God, some

may call it the cosmic force. I like to call it *Ishwara*, which means the undecaying, unchanging, real principle, that is the transcendental nature of life.

In life we encounter the changing, the decaying principle. So there is the decaying aspect, and the non-decaying aspect. In the world of matter we encounter the decaying principle. When we go beyond the world of matter we encounter the unchanging principle. The bridge between the changing and the unchanging principle is destiny. Destiny is the law that governs every aspect of creation. The growth of the body from birth till death is destiny. The maturity of the mind is destiny. The expression of human nature is destiny.

Destiny here means a process over which there is no conscious or human control but which goes on nevertheless. Can you stop your body from growing? Can you stop the body from maturing? Can you stop the plant from growing? Can you stop the fire from burning? Can you stop the wind from blowing? The expression of nature, the essence of nature is destiny. Destiny should not be taken as something beyond human comprehension. Rather it should be understood as the essence of the normal process of human evolution.

There is a statement in the Upanishads which says that through karma one can change one's destiny, meaning that through proper performance of action in life, through the harmonious expression of action in life, it is possible to change the quality of nature. Once the quality of nature changes, the expression of that nature is different. Was it the destiny of a river to be converted into a dam where hydro-electric power is generated? No. The nature or the destiny of the river is to flow from the highest to the lowest point. What we do in between is our problem. Nevertheless, the stream continues to flow from the highest to the lowest point. In between there may be some barriers, some dams, some man-made lakes, but the river continues on its course. When through action, through karma, we are trying to channel the forces of our life, then destiny is definitely transformed, there can be no question about it. This transformation of destiny leads to attainment of perfection in life.

There is a statement in the Upanishad which says that in the beginning there was fullness, and always there was fullness, and if you remove full from the full, only full remains. It is similar to the mathematical concept that whether you add, subtract, multiply or divide two zeros, the answer will always be zero. Now this is the concept of attainment, perfection and fulfillment in life. A person is always complete and has the potential to express that complete nature, but due to our conditioning we are never actually able to express our complete nature. We consider this limitation to be our destiny, when in reality our destiny is to experience the completeness, the fullness of life. It is the realization of that plenitude which is the aim of life and the aim of destiny.

So if the word destiny means that a human being has no control over situations then the definition must change. The proper meaning of destiny is to experience the essence of life as an evolutionary process and experiencing this evolutionary process should be the aim of karma. Karma leads to the experience and understanding of destiny provided one is able to awaken that kind of awareness and consciousness. One has to develop and awaken the human consciousness. When it develops, the forces that are within will also awaken. It is the awakening of human consciousness and the awakening of human potential which is the aim of human life and also the aim of yoga.

Growth of Yoga

When the ashram in Europe began here there was very little acceptance of yoga in society. People felt it was part of some eastern mysticism. Many people felt that it was part of an eastern religion and many felt that it was nothing but a group of physical practices. There was a deep fear in people's minds about accepting yoga but in the course of time we have seen people coming to yoga for various reasons. They have benefitted from its practices, and some people have even adopted the yogic lifestyle and this has been the story all over the world.

Initially we were teaching yoga in the classroom environment and people used to learn Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga. Those people who wanted to go deep into the yoga practices learnt other yogas also. This trend of yoga teaching continued for about two decades, in the '70's and '80's. In the decade of the '90's we are seeing a new emergence of yoga around the world and yoga is now being applied in different areas of society. Now I'm travelling in Europe to see the atmosphere here, to see what work is possible in relation to taking yoga to different levels of society so that we can appreciate its applied aspect and people can derive full benefit from it. I feel very strongly that it is time to take yoga out of the classroom environment and take it to schools, universities, hospitals and clinics because it has immense possibilities to help people. I'm not just talking about the body, brain and mind or of the diseases which we suffer in the body or in the

mind. I am speaking about the personality of human beings because, after all, it is the personality which manifests through the body, brain and mind.

Developing inner harmony and wisdom

The beauty of yoga is that it teaches those of us who are sincere how to convert human nature from negative to positive, from normal to creative, from *tamas* to *sattwa*. If we can understand this much, then yoga takes on a different meaning for us. Of course one has to work on oneself. One has to make the effort to change one's nature and to make this effort one has to find the time. We need to be aware of our reactions and we need to provide a direction for the change to take place. This is the training which we should try to get.

Whatever yoga we practise, a few things have to be clear in our mind, because yoga means harmony. One can say philosophically that yoga means union of self with the higher self but practically speaking you have to have harmony. It is that experience of harmony which we must aim at. Harmony can only be attained if we are aware of what is going on in our heads and learn to manage our mind and intellect. We need to give the mental faculties a clear direction to express their creativity. Only then will knowledge be converted into wisdom.

This is a very big problem for people. We have knowledge, we can read things and understand them. We can read thousands of things but until that knowledge is converted into practical experience we can never fully express that knowledge properly. It is wisdom which gives birth to the different human qualities in life.

Discrimination and awareness

Discrimination is the first thing that is a result of wisdom. Discrimination means being able to act according to the situation. Discrimination does not mean seeing the difference between right and wrong, because we never apply that understanding anyway; if we discriminate and see what is

right and wrong we always react to the wrong and ignore the good. So discrimination is acting according to the situation with greater clarity of mind.

Awareness is the second quality which develops and this helps to avoid excess levels of stress and tension. We always say that we are stressed by the environment, by the family, by the work, but how do we handle that stress? We go to a hotel, we take a bottle and we finish the total. Hotel-bottle-total, that is how we release stress from our life – and that is not a very positive way. In order to manage stress in our life it is necessary to develop awareness so that we can see how the environment is affecting our mind, how work is affecting our creativity, how our interaction with another person is affecting our creativity and so we can learn to control the negative aspect of that influence. That should be the aim of awareness. By developing awareness one should be able to control reactions, one should be able to guide one's actions and only then can awareness be called awareness.

What is the use of seeing everything and still being affected negatively? Awareness must generate creativity. These are the attainments of discrimination, viveka. With viveka an idea of self purification also develops. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna has stated very clearly that a yogi, a knower of yoga, performs actions with speech. Speech here represents the process of mutual interaction through the intellect and intellect here means the ability to understand through manas, the mind, through the rational activity of emotions and thoughts and desires, in order to obtain inner purification.

Developing harmonious self expression

Now, why does Sri Krishna specify speech, intellect and mind for inner purification? The reason is very simple. These are the neglected aspects of our life. We have never tried to improve them and these are the basic expression of our life. How can we develop compassion? How can we develop affection? How can we develop devotion or love if the basic components of expression are wrong? So awareness

and discrimination lead to self purification and once that is attained, harmony is attained, then knowledge is converted to wisdom. Wisdom is a natural expression of life. It is something which cannot be intellectually expressed, it is the living experience of knowledge. How can one define light? One has to experience it.

Four blind people go to see an elephant. One touches the leg of the elephant and says the elephant is like a pillar. Another holds the tail and says, no, the elephant is like a rope. The third one touches the trunk and says the elephant is not like a pillar or a rope, it is like a python. The fourth grabs hold of the ear and gives his own description. Now who is right out of the four? No one, because they are trying to define something which has not been experienced. So, that which we have not experienced but which we can think about is knowledge and what we know to be right is wisdom. Conversion of the negative, tamasic head or intellect into the sattwic state is the first aim of yoga. Then we deal with the qualities of the heart.

Working with the heart

The heart has always represented feelings and emotions which are pure and which are totally disconnected from the intellect. Fear is not related with rationality. If we are under the influence of fear then we can't think properly. Anger has nothing to do with intelligence, it is just a powerful burst of energy. Emotions represent the raw form of energy but that raw quality always takes us to conditioned expression.

There are some emotions which manifest very strongly and they are guided by our ego principle, self oriented motivations. There are some emotions which are very gentle in nature but are still guided by self centered motivation. All these represent the influence of the ego on our natural expression of emotions and feelings. This ego aspect has to be removed from the emotions because ego conditions them to express in a certain way. When the ego is removed from the feelings and from the emotions, then they become pure.

Let us look at it from a different angle. In every human being there are some strengths and abilities and at the same time there are some weaknesses; we have motivations and ambitions and at the same time we have certain actual real needs in life. When our strengths or abilities are overshadowed by weakness then our performance is not good at all. We restrict ourselves, we limit ourselves. Strength can be will power, clarity of mind, creativity. Weakness can be lack of self confidence, insecurity, an inferiority complex, not being able to relate properly with other people. When we see our weaknesses we tend to move very much to the negative side in our life, the negative ego aspect of the self. When we are in the negative side we try to improve our own self image and the expression of ego becomes more self oriented and the feelings, emotions and strengths are neglected.

Ambitions can be realistic or unrealistic. Needs can be personal, physical, social, financial, and we move on from one to the next. Many times ambition can guide our needs. Many times needs can be subject to weakness. All this imbalance in the structure of personality leads to a deteriorated self image in which we become more and more self centered, egotistic, self oriented. The negativities of life come up, sometimes jealousy, sometimes hatred, anger, frustration, and they tend to disrupt our normal lifestyle.

Working with the heart means being aware of the emotional response to a situation and learning how to change it from a negative expression to a positive expression so that these sentiments can be of a universal nature rather than self-limited awareness. This can be attained through meditation. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, from the very beginning it says that yoga should give you the ability to harmonize and discipline the inner being, the subtle aspect of personality and as a result of that ability you can control the mental modifications.

Understanding the role of ego

When we become aware of the subtle personality then we should know, we must know, that the subtle personality is

ego. If we could remove ego from ourselves we would not exist – and yet we have to live in the world. So we are not trying to eliminate ego from our life, we are simply trying to channel its manifestation in a positive direction so that the force of ego can eventually help us grow. In that process of growth we can control the nature and manifestations of the mind and senses.

How do we observe the nature of ego? Ego manifests first in the heart and much later in the head. When it manifests in the heart then we will notice hatred, aggression, frustration, jealousy, insecurities, and those feelings affect our rationality and later, our performance. To observe the negative effect of ego one must gradually practise meditation. It is not a process of escaping from the world, rather it is a process of rediscovering one's inner nature.

Manifesting the quality of one's inner life

In the process of rediscovery we eliminate negativities from the level of ego and when heart and head are purified then we work with the quality of the hands because it is the manifestation of our inner life which is now important. At this point intellect doesn't mean anything because wisdom is manifesting through the hands. At this point self centered emotion does not mean anything because the pure nature of our inner quality is manifesting through the hands. Hands represent the ability of right action.

There is one sentence which I have repeated many times in Europe. Human beings have not learned how to act, they only know how to react. Action will only take place properly with harmony of head, heart and hand, so our aim in yoga must be to harmonize the faculties of heart and head, and when this happens our whole personality undergoes a transformation. Life, instead of being a struggle, becomes a process of flowing. If we know how to flow then we arrive at the other shore. You know even if we want to cross a river in a boat we have to untie the rope.

A very interesting thing happened in Munger, where our ashram is right next door to the river Ganges. Some people

from Munger got drunk in the bar and they wanted to go for a boat ride in the middle of the night so they got in a boat and started to row.

Each one took turns rowing the boat for two hours; four people, they rowed for eight hours. When the morning light came, one said, "The world is the same all over the place. I remember these houses, they are like this in Munger also and I remember a similar ashram to this one in Munger. Even the swamis look the same and the people bathing in the river look the same." Another person said, "And that lady there looks exactly like my wife!" They had not lifted up the anchor and they had been rowing the whole night in the same place.

That is the story of our life also. Our anchor in life is ego and attachment, our anchor in life is desire and ambition. You just have to lift it up from the bottom, into the boat. You are not eliminating them, you are transferring them. From the bottom where you have no control, they come into the boat where they are under your observation. Then you can go anywhere, it doesn't matter.

This is the vision by which I feel I am guided now. I feel that now we need to work to harmonize our personality. It is alright to practise yoga for the body, for the brain and to obtain mental relaxation but at the same time we can develop a higher vision of yoga and then all kinds of attainments are here, not outside. There is one message that Paramahansa Satyananda gave me when I was initiated into sannyasa and I would like to share it with you now. There is no peace in the Himalayas and there is no noise in the world, everything is within you. If you are at peace with yourself you can find peace anywhere in the world and if you are not at peace with yourself you will never find peace in isolation in the mountains.

So we have to discover that nature which is within and at the same time we have to help others evolve and grow. We need to be simultaneously aware of the personal and the universal aspects of yoga; yoga as it applies to me as an individual and yoga as it applies to others as a universal

entity or force. Only then will we find that the path of life is covered with flowers and not with thorns. This is what I have to share with all of you, and I feel happy to be talking about the new dimension of yoga at the place where the first seed of yoga was planted in Europe.

Paris

International Education Conference



Yogic Education

I bring you greetings from the land of Bharat. Bharat is translated as India but it does not mean India, it means a country which is immersed in light. By Bharat I am not referring to the geophysical country which is known as India today but to a culture, a tradition, that has thought about human nature, about human personality and human mentality. It has evolved some thoughts in relation to the development of human life on this planet. According to this way of thinking, human beings become complete with the development of their total personality.

A new understanding of self

It is the development of the personality of human beings with which we are concerned, not just with the expressions of their mind or emotion or intellect, because mind, emotions and intellect represent forces which can be trained, channelled and controlled. These forces of our personality then interact with each other in life and give birth to the possibilities of action. But deeper than intellect, deeper than emotions, deeper than behavior, is human personality. It is the harmonization and the development of the human personality which leads to fulfillment and all kinds of achievements in life. When we are able to awaken this personality, the normal word used to describe this awakening is 'genius'. We should not look at the concept of genius from a superficial viewpoint but with the idea of knowing, awakening and building the human personality.

The message from Bharat has been this – the recognition of human nature and the recognition of human personality by going beyond the preconceived notions and definitions of intellect, emotions and expressions. It is in this context that we will have to look at our own life patterns, and our own lifestyles because definitely there are many levels of human expression, experience and consciousness. These different areas have to be tapped, they have to be recognized, they have to be awakened.

So it is the awakening of total life with which we should concern ourselves. This awakening can happen when we are able to discipline and build up our personalities. Discipline is an important word to understand. Discipline does not mean imposed rules and regulations, which limit the creative expression of mind and its various faculties. Rather discipline is that process of training our own selves by which we can ultimately experience the harmony and creativity in life. Discipline is not only external, it is also internal. It is also psychic, emotional, intellectual and, if I can say so, it is also spiritual.

We have to understand that every human being works at three levels and expresses three different qualities. The head represents knowledge, wisdom and experience. The heart represents feeling, sentiments and emotions. The hands represent the ability to act, the ability of performance, interaction. In today's society all over the world, it seems that we have lost the harmony of these three aspects of life. We have lost the balance and the expressions of our head, heart and hands and therefore in our own process of growth we are not able to fully express the creative nature which is inherent in each one of us.

Creative education

Sometimes I have wondered whether we come into this life only to take birth, to live life by raising a family, involving ourselves in work and eventually dying without any positive, creative and substantial contribution to the total concept of humanity. I have always felt there is a definite purpose which

is not of realization, rather it is of contributing in a natural, spontaneous and creative way to the growth and development of all humanity by expressing the harmonious nature of head, heart and hands.

In order to come to this point there has to be some training. There has to be education. This is an education which we have to provide for ourselves. Please don't mind if I say that the system of education in the world today is a job-oriented education which does not allow a person to realize the creative potential within. It only awakens and develops one aspect of our personality, an aspect of mind which is extroverted, competitive, self oriented and which is influenced by components of ego.

We must emphasize the creative education which can lead us to the experience of our inner nature in the outer world. This can happen by re-educating ourselves, by recognizing different aspects and dimensions and possibilities that exist within us. I am confident that during the next few days which we spend together we shall be looking into the various aspects of re-educating ourselves. It is with hope and inspiration that we shall leave this place and apply what we have learned and understood in this conference.

Balancing East and West: introversion and extroversion

There have been two kinds of civilization in the world. The western civilization has expressed itself externally. It has developed science which helps to manipulate nature according to the needs of an individual. The eastern civilizations all the way from Japan to China to the Middle-East sections, looked not externally but internally. They tried to live according to the laws of nature and did not try to manipulate them. Therefore they developed a different understanding of the human mind, the human consciousness and the human lifestyle. Now both of these systems are incomplete because they have only developed one aspect of knowledge and wisdom. They need to find a balance so that the external and the internal can be combined together. It is the role of science today to validate spiritual understanding.

I will define what spirituality is, but before that I would like to bring your attention to a statement in *Time* magazine a few months back. It said that the mystical experiences of Ezekiel, which are mentioned in the Bible, and the mystical experiences of the Latter Day Saints, were schizophrenic in nature. Now, I don't know what the intellectuals who read and write in *Time* magazine think about the integration of science with life and spirituality with life, but our view has been that true spirituality, I'm not mixing religion with spirituality, is the unfoldment and development of harmony between body, mind and spirit.

The lesson of today

It is in this context that we should look at the possibilities of re-educating ourselves tomorrow. Tomorrow here does not mean a distant future. Human beings have this beautiful tendency of living in the past and worrying about the future by totally ignoring the present. Because of this condition in life we are not improving our present; we are caught up in the conflicts of the past and we are insecure about the future. We should understand that the future for us is here and now, living moment to moment. Some people may take it as a philosophical concept, some people may see it as practical advice but the question is, how do we now integrate the faculties and qualities of head, heart and hands.

How to integrate these three qualities is not known commonly, only a few know. These are leaders or thinkers who are at a different level, not social, not political. In relation to human personality we can even call them spiritual thinkers. In order to bring down that concept, that understanding to our present structure of life we need to look at methods of applying these concepts and ideas practically in our present life system.

There can be some form of change, there can be some alteration of concepts in practical life. We are at different levels of evolution, I'm not talking of intellect but of a deeper perception of mind. Some people have that sensitivity well developed, some do not. We need to translate the concepts

which deal with this inner harmony into modern language. That is the role of invention. We must invent a system by which we can re-educate ourselves by recognizing the limitations of our understanding and of our acceptance. When we apply those concepts today we are working for the future, which is tomorrow.

The revival of yogic education in India

We teach yoga in educational institutions. According to the new education policy of the government of India, yoga is to be incorporated at high school level in order to train students to develop their mental faculties. Not many states in India have fully implemented that policy but a few states have educated their teachers and they have been given a specific syllabus for the ages between seven and sixteen. In Bihar, which is the state where I come from, the government has sent two thousand teachers from different schools to our place and we have given them one month's training in teaching yoga to children. Also in the southern states of India about five thousand high school teachers have been trained in the yogic system. Slowly acceptance is growing and there is a revival of bringing yoga to the schools. But I should mention that the credit for bringing yoga to schools in India goes to France because of RYE's activity. The results of the Research in Yoga for Education's activities were presented to the Government of India and it is due to RYE that yoga has come to the schools in India.

In order to propagate the ideas of samskara, anushasana and an aim in life; in order to make life a richer experience, we have recently opened the Bihar Yoga Bharati. This will be the first yoga university in the world, and through Bihar Yoga Bharati we are trying to contribute towards the betterment of education in society.

Refining the Samskaras

The potential of inner silence

If you analyze the sequence of the proceedings this morning you will see a very intricate link. The proceedings opened with a discussion on having a vision of what lies beyond the door. The second session moved on to a discussion on stress and tension. If I give my opinion on the subject, I would say that we know that immense possibilities do exist which we have to discover and which we have not yet discovered. Because we condition ourselves to hear what we wish to hear, to see what we wish to see, to feel what we wish to feel, we are not able to experience the possibilities of achievements and realizations that exist. Because of this self conditioning, stress levels are created within us.

In our third session the method of managing stress was described by coming into the state of silence. Once we reach the state of silence then all the tensions from within, all the internal anxieties, tend to drop out and one experiences inner peace, happiness, bliss, contentment. When we begin to experience this stage of harmony within, what happens? We confront hope in life, we realize hope in life. This has been the sequence of today's unspoken lecture.

Let us look at it in a different way. We drive a car, we sit behind the steering wheel and by looking out of the window we see the road on which we have to go. We start our car, what we see out of the window is the awareness that we are moving, that these possibilities exist outside and that this

is the aim that we have to reach. When we start the car, when we shift the gear into first and the car begins to move forward, then that is stress, that is movement. In any sort of movement there is bound to be stress. If we can harmonize ourselves with that stress then it is a very positive and creative situation. If we are not able to harmonize the stress then that is when it becomes distress.

So moving from one gear to the next and driving the car represents the process of control and stress we use to reach the goal which we have set in front of ourselves. But you do not move from one gear to a second without any break, in between there is a neutral point. In order to move from the first gear into second you have to come to neutral. In order to move from second gear into third you have to come to neutral. Neutral is the cessation of all activities for a moment. In that moment of cessation, of stopping, there is silence. When there is perfect co-ordination between the driver and the car, and when the spontaneous activities interact, you are not allowed to become tense, frustrated, depressed or anxious and then that represents hope.

Sanskara as the basic process of education

In this context I would like to introduce another concept to you, that of *sanskara*. *Sanskara* is a Sanskrit word which has been very often used in the Indian traditions. It means education, impressions in the mind leading to creative performance. Now educating the total mind and creating these impressions on the mind is a life-long process. We are continuously being educated. Our personality, our mind, our behavior, our attitude, the entire life pattern is being educated not only by the academic form of education but also by the education which we derive from our culture, from our family, our environment and mentality. Academic education is only one part of *sanskara*.

This *sanskara* begins at the time of conceiving the child. There have been ample evidences in the history of humanity which have proved that the education of a child begins in the womb. The education of the child in the womb is not an

academic education, it is the education of basic impressions which determine the quality of life and which determine the future direction of life. This samskara, this inner education manifests later on in the course of life in the form of attitudes, behaviors, performance, and in many different ways.

Anushasana, governing the subtle personality

There is also the possibility of creating different samskaras, re-educating the mind and creating different impressions within the mind which are more harmonious with nature, life, and the entire being. This possibility of receiving samskaras happens through another process and the Sanskrit word for this is *anushasana*, which means having the ability to govern, to direct, the subtle forces of the human personality. This is something which everyone must try to achieve if they wish to be fulfilled in life. Intellect represents only one aspect of our nature and personality. Emotions represent another aspect of our entire personality. Behaviors and attitudes represent other aspects of our entire personality. In a normal interaction there is interaction not only of intellect but also of emotion, not only of emotion but also of attitude, not only of attitude but of what we project energetically.

So, in one simple interaction there are many things which are being exchanged by the individuals. It is not only words which are being interchanged, it is not only a feeling or a knowledge which is being exchanged. Exchange is happening in many dimensions at the same time but since we are not aware of these subtle exchanges which are taking place between us, and we identify with the intellectual concepts and rationality, many times we feel that certain concepts become misleading. We feel that certain situations which should aim at providing us with a deeper understanding tend to create more confusion about the basic and simple things in life.

I gave a hint previously that the basis of interaction or the aim of interaction should be wisdom, not knowledge. Wisdom is applied knowledge, it is not an intellectual understanding,

but in order to come to this level we have to look at a few things. We must know the components that influence the human personality.

The SWAN theory in relation to education

I have been able to create the SWAN theory, which is an acronym. Each letter stands for a particular aspect of our personality. I feel that every individual, especially the educators, people who provide us with education, right from the basic kindergarten level to the highest level in society, including our own family members, must become aware of the SWAN principle. Not only the educators but also the learners, those who have a desire to learn, who want to improve themselves by understanding the process of learning, should be aware of some of the components of the SWAN principle.

What is this SWAN principle? 'S' stands for strengths; we as individuals have our own strengths. Some people have willpower, that is their strength. Some people have a creative mind, a deep understanding of situations or a very positive attitude towards life. Some people have a good memory or they relate with others easily and that is their strength.

Strengths can be different in different situations. A child of four and a person in their thirties or in their eighties all express their strengths in different ways. If we observe each person carefully, we can see what their strengths are. We can know when a child, or a student going to college or an elderly person is confused and is not expressing themselves creatively. We can feel it, we can know it; and if someone has a clear mind we can also know that. Strength manifests differently in different situations and also in different environments.

Another aspect is 'W' which stands for weakness. This weakness again takes different meaning for different people. Weakness can be lack of self image, lack of will power, lack of comprehension, and what ever other things we may want to fit in this category. I'm only giving you a few examples, I'm not telling you the entire list. Strength and weakness always

complement each other but there are times when we tend to identify more with our weaknesses and we forget how to use our strengths.

Understanding and acceptance as the basis for creative education

Now if the educator and the learner are aware of the strengths and weaknesses which are their own and which also exist in another person, then the process of education takes on a different meaning. Then the process of education does not remain confined to a few writings on the blackboard and to a few studies of different literatures. What do we see here? There is an acceptance. There is an acceptance of each other's conditions and levels of mind. The interaction takes place at the level where I know what your limitations and strengths are and I try to help you, where you understand what my limitations and strengths are and you don't criticize them, and you accept me. This is the relationship which must exist between an educator and a learner. Whether at the age for kindergarten or at a different age, the relationship should be based on an understanding of the qualities which manifest in the life of a young student or an old student, and which also manifest in the life of an educator.

Certain things happen and change as we grow up. As we grow up we encounter the third letter, 'A', which stands for ambition, and ambition becomes the deciding factor for our motivations, aspirations and interactions in life. If the educator is ambitious then that ambition will reflect on the learner too. If the learner is ambitious and the educator knows that the learner is ambitious, then the educator, with the application of right wisdom, can guide the learner to handle that situation in a different way. If the understanding is not there then there is always going to be a deep conflict, a deep struggle, and the education will not be a creative education.

I see education in two ways: one is commercial education and one is creative education. We are exposed to commercial education and we have not yet been exposed to creative

education. We can think about it, we can speak about it but we have not lived it. You have not lived it, I have not lived it, yet we are thinking about it.

Living creatively

We have not lived creative education because we don't have the basic *samskara* in life. We have not experienced creative education because we lack the basic discipline or *anushasana* in life, and we don't have a real aim. The aim of knowledge for us is to achieve status, the aim of knowledge for us is to achieve security; the aim of knowledge for us has not been to gain wisdom and apply that in our life situations. Now we are beginning to divert that concept of knowledge into wisdom but it will take time and a lot of work.

The last letter 'N' stands for need. We all have our needs. Needs can be physical in nature, needs can be emotional in nature or social in nature. In order to sustain a family, finance is a need. In order to live in society there are certain needs like having a shelter. In order to sustain our body there are certain needs like eating meals. Needs have to be recognized.

Understanding the SWAN concepts allows mental transmission

When our strengths, our weaknesses, our ambitions and our needs are not balanced, are not looked at, then stress is created in life. I remember students used to go to school without anything in their hands. Paper and pen was something unknown to us and the teaching that used to happen was the teaching of one mind to another mind. Today, when I see students going to school the quantity of books which they carry weighs more than the actual weight of their bodies. The transmission of mind has dropped, it is just the transmission of the written word which has now come to the surface and this is a very big imbalance in our whole educational system. Therefore, since we can't avoid this imbalance, it is not under our control, what can we do?

The educators have to educate themselves not on the subject which they have to teach the students but on

developing the ability to recognize the four components which influence the human personality. These are the four components of strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. If the educators can understand this process then you can be one hundred percent sure that within a decade the entire system of our education will change. Even the dimension of education will change. Education will not remain confined to a classroom environment, rather our whole life will be seen as a process of education, as a process of learning, as a process of fulfillment.

At the same time the learners also, instead of being given initial training in written education must be taught to interact with the mind. They must be made aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, strengths which they can utilize in their lives to develop creativity, to develop awareness, to develop acceptance, understanding and relaxation. In this way they will be in a better position to handle, to manage their weaknesses. Once we are able to manage these four components which are influencing our personality then we shall come to the aspect of harmonious performance of intellect, knowledge and the outer world, which is the yogic concept of hope.

Samskara represents the door, which is there but we have to make the effort to open that door and to step outside. We have to make the effort to have that vision, to see what is outside and also to experience what is inside and to attain harmony in both. Discipline, anushasana, which is knowing and governing the subtle aspect of our personality, represents the concept of silence. When we don't know our personality there is no silence.

Self knowledge and inner silence

There is a very beautiful message which was given to me by my master when he said, "Look, there is no silence in the Himalayas and there is no noise in the world, both are within you." If you can find the silence within yourself then even in the most crowded areas of this planet you will be at peace with yourself. If you can't find that peace within then even in the

most isolated place you will never experience that peace and harmony and beauty and silence.

So this concept of anushasana, of knowing the subtle personality, means harmonizing our internal being so that harmony and silence are experienced. It is merging the small principle which comes along with awareness, which comes with the acceptance of the conditions in life, which comes with being able to relax in the most trying and difficult situations in life without reacting. It comes with harmonious performance, where the faculties of body, mind and spirit are unified. That is the stage of hope. What is hope? Looking ahead with clarity of mind, with inspiration, with contentment, with faith, trust and conviction in our own strengths and capabilities and that way I can see that life is a beautiful unfolding mystery.

I was interested to hear these views on silence and I wondered, it has been my experience that many people are actually afraid of silence. This is the reason why people have music in restaurants and watch television a great deal of the time, because they are actually not comfortable being with people and not speaking. I wondered, do people have views about the origin of silence and how we might be able to change people's views about it?

People think of silence as isolating oneself from the external environment but this is not an accurate description of silence. Silence, let me describe it from the Sanskrit word *mouna*. *Mouna* means measured activity. It is not an uncontrolled activity. The concept of silence in the yogic tradition, especially when we talk in terms of *mouna*, a measured activity, implies a very great level of awareness in your own expressions. You are a master, in control of your expressions.

The first language that we learn in an ashram is practising *mouna* of speech. It doesn't mean that we stop talking, but it means that we become in tune with what we are expressing, see the validity of that expression, see the usefulness of that expression, and see whether it is conducive to the attainment of harmony within our human personality and nature.

The second level of mouna is *antar mouna* practise, thought control. In this also we begin to observe our thoughts. In fact this is a practice of meditation too. We pick up a thought and we follow it through to the source and see how that thought is being influenced by our ego, by our selfishness, by our creativity, by our openness, by our confined mentality. We discover the various components of thought, which part is being influenced by desires, which is being influenced by need, which is being influenced by a sense of superiority, and we learn to measure that, handle that. So silence in the yogic tradition does not mean cessation of activity, rather it is a measured activity.

Awareness and Concentration

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Practice of awareness

Today we will begin by doing a short practice. Wherever you are, however you may be seated, please close your eyes and place the feet firmly on the ground.

Become aware of the contact between the feet and the ground. Place the hands on top of the thighs. Become aware of the contact between the hands and the thighs. Become aware of the contact between the body and the seat. These are the three areas of contact in the body right now. Those of you who are reclining can also feel the contact between your back and the back of the seat – in this case the areas of contact become four.

Keep your eyes closed throughout the practice.

Take your attention down to your feet, to the soles of the feet. Observe all the sensations. Observe the feeling of contact between the soles of the feet and the ground.

Now bring the awareness to the buttocks. Feel the contact between the buttocks and the seat on which you are sitting, the sensations, the feelings. Observe the entire experience of contact.

Now become aware of the contact between the hands and the thighs, the sensations, the feelings, the total range of perception between the hands and the thighs.

If you are reclining then become aware of the contact between your back and the back of the seat. Observe that contact. In this way become aware of the whole body from the top of the head to the toes, complete awareness of the whole body. Now focus your attention in the forehead, in the region of the eyebrow center.

We are going to see a movie, a film of the events that have happened during the whole day, from the time you woke up till now. Go back in time to the moment you opened your eyes in bed.

Try to know what the first thing was that you saw when your eyes opened, whether it was the ceiling of the room, whether it was the telephone or the covers over your body. See yourself opening your eyes in the morning at the time of waking up and direct your attention to the first vision of the day, the first sight of the day.

Now find out, at that same moment, what was the first thought? What did you think? It could have been something serious, it could have been something funny. It could even have been the thought, "What is the time now?" or "Now I have to get up." Whatever may have come into your mind, become aware of that, in the same words, in the exact phrase that you thought it this morning. Remember it now.

What were the physical sensations when you woke up? Try to remember the physical sensations –the feeling of warmth and comfort, the touch of the bed and the body, the contact between the coverings and the body. Know all the physical sensations by really living the moment when you first opened your eyes.

Now try to remember the first movement. Did you move the head or did you move the hands and arms? In which direction? What did you do? Try to remember the first movement.

It is only one moment of time, the time when you woke up, but in that moment the body was experiencing many different sensations, feelings. In the mind there were many thoughts. Observe all of them – try to observe all of them.

In this moment of waking up try to see whether the thoughts are connected with the physical movements or not. How the

thought, “I have to get up now”, connects with the physical movement that you perform in order to get up. Which foot came out of the bed first to the ground? Just try to see a movie of yourself; not through your own eyes and mind but by being another person in the room observing how you act getting up: what kinds of movements you are making, what kinds of thoughts you are having, what kind of dress you are wearing, what kind of bed you are sleeping in, what kind of room you are in, whether it is light inside the room or dark inside the room, where you turned the light on.

Try to remember what you did five minutes after waking up. Live each moment. The memories are there, the impressions are in the mind. You have to bring them out.

Now let us jump a bit forward in time – breakfast. Where were you having breakfast?

With whom were you having breakfast? What were you having? How was the environment?

What was within the field of vision? Who else was there with you? What were you talking about?

How was your body posture at the time of breakfast? Were you shifting and shuffling, or were you relaxed and upright? Were you feeling tired or were you feeling light and happy?

Live the moment of breakfast. See yourself in that situation and live the moment of breakfast consciously. What were you eating? What was the taste that you were enjoying? What were the sounds that you were hearing? What were the sights that you were seeing? What were the physical sensations that you were feeling in the body?

Then jump forward to the time you came here. What did you do here? See yourself enacting the same movements, speaking the same things, thinking the same things which you did at that moment of walking in through the doors till the time you eventually sat down on your seat. Live those moments between walking through the door and sitting down in your seat.

Observe what your mental condition was then. What were you thinking? How were you interacting with the people who had come with you, or with the people around you? How were you interacting with the environment?

Now jump back to the present, this moment, right here and now, the physical condition, the mental condition, the emotional condition.

Observe the condition of the entire being. Acknowledge the condition of your being.

Slowly externalize the senses and the mind.

Gradually move the body and open your eyes. Take a deep breath in and exhale.

Hari Om Tat Sat

Yesterday I was speaking about the need to expand the field of our awareness in order to take in the different aspects of human nature and the different levels of interaction that happen spontaneously within ourselves. I had mentioned that we need to observe four areas which guide our concepts, thoughts, feelings, inspirations, and our physical, emotional and mental activity. These four areas were the SWAN components: strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. Also I mentioned that every educator and learner must become aware of these four components if they want to experience the fullness and richness of life.

Developing awareness

Now taking the same subject one step further, we have to begin developing awareness. The nature of awareness has to be understood. People define awareness as an extension of the cognitive faculties of mind. They may be right, but I feel that awareness has to begin with something very simple and basic. We can start by just looking at one moment of time; not one hour, not one minute, but just one moment of time in our life. The practice we did was just to give an idea of the direction that my talk is going to take today.

The moment which we chose was the earliest one of the day, when we opened our eyes. Now, we may think what is the importance of awareness at that time? We open our eyes and we go about our business. We get out of bed and we start running to the bathroom, brushing our teeth, changing our clothes, taking our baths, getting ready for the daily routine, but mind

you, awareness of one moment of the day is very important in order to experience the field of human perception.

Every moment we are being bombarded by sensory inputs, rational inputs and stimulations, but we are not aware of them. We are not attentive to these inputs within our personality. When we begin to observe what is actually happening, we always find a definite link between a thought and its influence on the body, between a desire and the performance, between an ambition and our physical activity.

People may think this kind of awareness is not necessary, because if human beings become aware of all the components which we are experiencing every moment, then life would become hell to live. However we are not discussing a level of awareness where the mind is dissipated and distracted, but one where we can develop a capacity of observation which takes into account the interaction of an individual with the environment. Why?

Levels of stress block the spontaneity and creativity of mental functions. When we are bombarded by the sensory inputs, all the impressions are received by the total mind. You can divide the total mind into a thousand pieces if you so wish, into thought, emotion, desire, senses, conscious, subconscious and unconscious, but first we have to think of the total mind. We have to observe the interaction that is happening between an individual, the total mind and the environment.

Why did we practise awareness of the moment we opened our eyes in the morning at the time of waking up? Why ask ourselves what did we see? What was the first image that came to the open eyes? What was the first movement of the body, the first thought that flashed across the mind, the first sensation that the physical body and senses experienced? If we observe in this way the entire dimension of our field of experience, we will notice that one moment is an infinite moment. That infinite moment can give knowledge of the total environment to the mind, although previously we had only observed one thing.

As a practice of self development, I suggest that you do this practice of going back in time every night before going

to sleep. It serves two purposes. First, it allows you to put aside the worries which otherwise follow you to your death. Generally when we go to sleep at night we don't sleep alone. Our problems and insecurities sleep with us, not only our husband or wife. Our mental and emotional imbalances, anxieties and frustrations also go to bed with us. At the time of sleep there is a load of these other components which are pressurizing us, altering the tranquil state of our mind. Therefore, many times we feel that our sleep is not a full, deep, relaxing sleep.

Secondly, by observing yourself and the events of the day, you are acknowledging the conditions and the states which you have encountered. If there is a negative influence from those circumstances you can recognize it and see how it has affected your being and your performance. That way the unconscious reaction is made conscious, it comes to your knowledge, "This is where I made a mistake in my interaction, I reacted that way and I could have interacted this way, I could have improved the situation in this way." So this second aspect of the practice is a process of educating the mind to become aware, thus eliminating levels of tension and stress which suppress the creativity of our personality.

Extended awareness results in harmonious self discipline

To develop awareness is very simple if you do this practice. You will notice that in one month's time your entire perceptions, behavior and attitudes will change. You will become a master of yourself. You will be in control of yourself. That is the concept of discipline. Discipline which comes from being aware represents harmony, it represents an extended form of awareness. Yoga has never believed discipline to be an imposed structure of rules. You know what yoga says about such imposed structures of rules? I'll tell you. If you get a dog with a curly tail and from the time of birth you put the tail in a straight pipe, after four or five years when you remove the pipe, what will happen? Will the tail remain straight? No. It will curve back to its original state.

In the same way, discipline which we impose on ourselves is just an external imposition of rules, behavior and attitudes, which do not affect our inner being at all. The moment the external structure falls, the real nature which has not changed, manifests. Is that the aim of discipline? Just to create an external structure and not change the inner being? No. The concept of discipline in yoga takes a different meaning. It says external structures are alright, as per the conditions of society and the needs of the environment – that's fine – but more important is the awareness and harmonization of the internal being. This awareness and harmonization of the internal self represents true discipline.

Education places harmony of the self before external goals

In this process, discipline is a system of education. Yoga has always looked at the entire life as a process of education rather than attainment. Attainments are the results of your effort to obtain fulfillment and perfection in one level of life. Although we identify with attainments, more important is the process which we apply to attain the result. If the process is not correct then the result is not going to be correct and there will still be a deep tension and stress created within us.

We have been struggling in this aspect of our life. We have been going after attainments without harmonizing our actions. We have been looking for achievements without coming to terms with ourselves, and this is one of the causes of the disturbances humanity is feeling in life. Our energies are being dissipated. There is no focus of our potential, our potential is not being used. After all, we have to recognize that life is a process of experiencing energy and consciousness. If you ignore consciousness and energy, then there is no life at all. If we are able to develop our energy and consciousness then the fullness and richness of life is seen.

The development and awakening of energy, and the expansion of consciousness has to take place through the process of education. Awareness is the most important key here, awareness which encompasses the entire dimension of human interaction and experience. However, one has to

train oneself to be aware. Generally we identify awareness with the self-oriented understanding that, 'I become aware', but actually it is not that. 'I' simply becomes a tool for experiencing the vast field of awareness which already exists. 'I' simply becomes the medium through which we can experience awareness. Awareness is there all the time but the limitations of our mind always direct our attention to focus on a particular point.

Let us look at this moment of time right now. Are you aware of what is happening in this room, or are you aware of my speech only? Are you aware that you are moving your bodies, that you are thinking at the same time that you are listening to me? Are you aware of the different sensory impressions that are being received, the sensation of touch, the coolness or warmth of the environment? One could ask a thousand questions and find that we are unable to answer them because there is a filtering, a process of suppression going on deep inside us.

Combining the power of concentration with the broad vision of awareness

In order to experience awareness one should also be aware of concentration. Now this is a very funny situation where we are talking of awareness and concentration, because concentration generally implies focusing of the mind and eliminating all the things which are at the periphery. Awareness implies a state of no concentration, where you have a broad vision. So how can we combine awareness with concentration?

First of all, let us look at the practical side of directing our attention to one activity. In that activity we limit our perception to what is happening, but within that limitation we are broadening our perception to see the different levels of experiences that we are gaining.

The example was the moment when we woke up this morning. You might have felt that you were concentrating and trying to relive that moment as a film, not within you but as something external. There is a difference between experiencing and seeing something. In one you are not the

person there, but if we become that, if we are able to feel the activity, the interaction of the body, the senses, mind, feelings, movements and the environment in one moment, then it implies concentration and awareness at the same time.

Concentration is necessary to stop the dissipation of mind. This is the only purpose of concentration. Apart from this concentration has no other meaning and it serves no other purpose. Stop the dissipated nature of the mind. Stop the distraction of mind by focusing it upon one activity, one event, one point. But when you have focused yourself on that point, then enlarge the area of perception and cover the entire dimension of human personality. This is another form of training which we need to give ourselves.

What I feel is that we can talk about the development of memory but we are talking about only one aspect of our entire personality. We may talk about gaining knowledge, reading books and experiencing something different, but in all our discussions we deal with only one level of our nature. It's all right to experience that nature of our personality, but we have to consider the influence of each experience on the total being.

So our aim should not be directed towards one thing only. In whatever we do, think, say or decide, an aspect of our consciousness must see that we are able to integrate that with the total being and the total life. It should not remain as an isolated chapter with no link to the other chapters. Integration can happen when, apart from being aware and observant of what is happening externally, you are able to link that with your entire personality. We need to give ourselves the ability to observe the reactions, attitudes and behaviors that are being expressed by an individual, whether a child or an elderly person, a normal, supernormal or abnormal person.

In order to observe what is being expressed in the areas of strength, weakness, ambition and need, and in order to harmonize these various levels, our awareness has to focus and expand at the same time. Yoga definitely provides a very effective method for this in the system of Raja Yoga.

Pratyahara means expanded awareness which allows concentration

In the system of Raja Yoga, the first area of mind awareness is known as pratyahara. What happens in pratyahara? People translate pratyahara as a technique of concentration or a technique which withdraws the mind from the outer dimension and focuses it inside. But the stages of pratyahara are very different. Withdrawing, focusing, or concentrating the mind is the result of having perfected pratyahara.

So what is pratyahara? The first stage is extension of the awareness to the senses of the body and to their experiences. What are the visions, the sights that I'm seeing now? Be aware of the whole thing – there is no need to turn the head. Just look straight ahead for a moment and see the entire picture as a whole. Have that recognition that you are seeing the whole picture. What are the sensations which are being felt by the sense of touch, by the sense organ of the skin? Not only in one part of the body but throughout the body. Here the skin is feeling the coolness of the environment, there the body warmth, or contact with the clothes. In other parts of the body different sensations are being experienced. What are we smelling, what are we tasting, what are we hearing? What is the range of our hearing? Extension of attention, extension of awareness from here into the outer dimension is the first level of pratyahara.

The second stage is recognizing how we react to the influences of the senses. Let us say there is a flower in front of me and I'm smelling that. I'm sensing the smell but at the same time there is a reaction happening. Now, in observing that reaction; am I liking that, am I enjoying it? That enjoyment and appreciation is a reaction. If I smell something rotten here will I enjoy it? Will I appreciate it? No. There will be rejection. So, observing these reactions to the physical senses is the second level of pratyahara.

The third stage of pratyahara is observing the functions of the senses and the faculties of cognition, how they interact with the environment and the world. The fourth level of pratyahara is observing how we react to the interaction

of the mental senses. The fifth level is harmonizing the reactions with the actual functioning and performance of the physical and mental senses so that there is acceptance, awareness and discrimination, so that there is realization of the real and the unreal both. In this way we extend our awareness and attention outside and reabsorb that awareness within.

Then comes dharana

Then begins the process of focusing. We focus ourselves on one object, one thought, one feeling, one desire or whatever, and go to the source of that activity. In this way we avoid imbalances which can hamper the creative expression of the natural faculties of life.

This is the role that awareness and concentration can play in our life. We have to develop our ability in extending, recognizing and experiencing awareness. We have to try to develop our ability to experience concentration. These two things are a must for every being on this planet who is consciously active and who is not living in the instinctive dimension.

Awareness and concentration are two components of life which cannot be ignored. In order to gain experience in these aspects of consciousness we have to train ourselves through a system, a correct sequence of educative practices. In my opinion, those people who have a vision of a different world, and who desire to bring about a definite and substantial change in the structure of life in society, must not forget the relevance of awareness and concentration in life. Those who consider all the different discoveries and understandings which we are developing about our nature and personality must not lose the concept of self education in the fields of awareness and concentration. This is the main tool in making ourselves creative.

Practise and then share your knowledge and experience

So, in conclusion I would just like to remind you to combine the knowledge and understanding of the SWAN principle

with the components of awareness and concentration. Practise it yourself and also teach it. It can be taught to everyone in a classroom environment. Even at a young age you can ask children to see the movie of their day's events: what they did in the morning, what they had for breakfast, how they came to school, what their first class was, how the teacher was, did they love the teacher, did they dislike the teacher – you can take them through the practice for five minutes, not more. You can share your experiences in schools and colleges with children and with adults. You will be helping their awareness of life to develop and eventually they will be able to contribute creatively to the human society of which we are all life members.

Om Tat Sat

Glossary

Abhyasa – practice

Acharya – teacher; spiritual preceptor

Adi – original, primordial

Agni – fire

Agnisar kriya – increases prana and heat in the body through pranayama and mudra; preparatory for nauli

Aham – individuality, the concept of ‘I’

Ahamkara – the ego factor which identifies the self with the material environment; identity of the individual being

Ahara – the craving for satisfaction; the urge to consume

Ahimsa – absence of negativity from within; non-violence

Ajna chakra – concentration point at the top of the spine; seat of intuition and higher knowledge; center of command

Akara – form; dimension in which individuality manifests

Akasha – space; Brahman

Akasha dharana – preparatory practice for Laya Yoga

Alakh Bara – invisible boundary; secluded place for sadhana

Amaroli – the practice of using one’s own urine for therapy

Anahata chakra – concentration point in the spine behind the heart; center of emotion, feeling and subtle vibration

Anandamaya kosha – the dimension of bliss

Annamaya kosha – the dimension of matter; the physical body

Antar darshan – vision of the inner self; the practice of observing emotions in the hridayakasha

Antar dhyana – observing and channeling the desires

Antar mouna – thought observation; inner silence

Anu – a prefix representing the subtle dimensions; atom
Anushasanam – governing or managing the subtle aspects of human personality; discipline
Anusthana – constant remembrance of God; observance
Apana vayu – downward flowing prana between manipura and mooladhara
Aparigraha – happiness with whatever is there without any desire for more; non-accumulation
Arohan – a nadi or flow of ascending energy; to climb
Artha – security in the social realm
Asana – steady, comfortable meditative pose; physical posture in which one is at ease and in harmony with oneself
Ashram – place for work; spiritually based community
Ashuddha – impure
Ashwini mudra – involves contraction and relaxation of the anal sphincter muscles causing a rise in pranic energy
Asteya – an inner state in which one is true to oneself; non-stealing; honesty
Atha – now, therefore
Avadhoota – one who transcends body and worldly consciousness
Avasthanam – to be established in
Avidya – ignorance of reality
Awarohan – a nadi of descending energy; to climb down
Ayurveda – a traditional Indian system of medicine
Bandha – psychomuscular lock which redirects the flow of prana
Basti – a practice which cleans the bowels
Bija – seed
Bhakti Yoga – yoga of devotion; changing conditioned love into an unconditioned universal state
Bharat – a land which is immersed in light; India
Bhastrika – bellows breathing; a vitalizing pranayama
Bhava – attitude, state of being according to Tantra
Bhaya – fear, especially fear of the unknown
Bhramari – tranquilizing pranayama; humming breath
Bhuh loka – dimension of consciousness related to the dimension of earth and mooladhara chakra
Bhuvah Loka – dimensions of consciousness related to the element of water and swadhisthana chakra

Bindu – the source; a drop; psychic center, the concentration point is at the back of the head where the hair whorls

Brahmacharya – being established in Brahman

Brahmacharya asana – lifting the seated body from the floor by balancing on the palms with the arms and legs straight, thus causing a rise in pranic energy

Brahman – the consciousness which allows growth to take place; the one unchanging reality

Buddhi – aspect of mind dealing with understanding human nature; intellect; higher intelligence

Chaitanya – eternal; the conscious

Chakra – wheel; vortex of prana; psychic center; 15th to 21st levels of evolution where energy is active and consciousness is passive

Chidakasha – the mental screen; the space of chitta

Chitta – aspect of mind which receives impressions of the present experience and stores it for future use

Dasnami – sannyasa tradition of Adi Shankaracharya consisting of ten branches: Aranya, Ashrama, Bharati, Giri, Parvati, Puri, Sagara, Saraswati, Teertha and Vanam

Daharakasha – the space in the regions of mooladhara and swadhisthana; space associated with vijñānamaya kośha

Darshan – vision; actual manifestation of the image

Deva – the luminous nature of the spirit

Dharana – concentration; the focusing of mental energies; holding the state of creativity of the senses and the mind

Dharma – inner knowledge of one's correct duty or obligation; expression of natural sattvic qualities

Dhauti – techniques which purify different parts of the body

Dhoti – unstitched cloth used as lower garment

Dhyana – fusion of the mind with the object of contemplation, inner awakening; natural expression of sattvic state

Diksha – initiation; from the verb to see or to concentrate

Diwali – Festival of Light, traditional celebration in India when the goddess Lakshmi gives blessings

Drashta – the observer, the witness, the seer

Dukha – pain, suffering

Dweshha – repulsion; something which brings pain or enmity
Ekagra – the state of one-pointed attention
Ekant – solitude, total isolation
Gayatri mantra – om bhuh, om bhuvah, om swah, om mahah, om janah, om tapah, om satya
Geru – orange dye used on the dhotis of sannyasins
Grihastha – householder
Guna rahita akasha – space without attributes; preparatory to Laya Yoga observing consciousness related with mooladhara
Gunas – attributes; sattwa, rajas and tamas; natural qualities governing life; genetic qualities of the universe
Guru – one who guides us in our process of evolution and enables us to become stable in our spiritual life; dispeller of darkness; that inspiration which manifests within
Guru poornima – celebration of guru's grace in July
Ham – bija mantra for vishuddhi chakra
Hamsa Dhyana – higher meditative practice
Hatha Yoga – practices to balance the pranas which are manifesting in the body and in the mind
Hridayakasha – heart space of feelings and anahata chakra
Hum – mantra governing the solar force
Ida – nadi connected with the left nostril, the lunar aspect, the passive mental force
Indra – king of the gods; controller of the senses
Indriyas – the senses, the forces which rule the mind
Ishta devata – symbol of divinity
Ishwara – a state of unchanging transcendental reality
Ishwara pranidhana – surrender or dedication to the divine will by realizing the cosmic energy which flows within us
Jagrit – conscious mind
Jal – water
Janah Loka – the dimension of consciousness related to vishuddhi chakra and the space element
Japa – repetition
Jhola – shoulder bag
Jignasu Sannyasa – path of the seekers who maintain their normal lifestyle, their identity as spiritual seekers and perform sadhana to cultivate certain qualities in life

Jivan – life

Jnana – wisdom; path of understanding and knowledge

Jnanendriyas – the five organs of knowledge, the five senses

Jyoti – light, flame

Jyotir linga – symbol of incandescent consciousness, Shiva

Kama – desire

Kapalbhati – breathing technique to purify and stimulate the frontal lobe of the brain

Kapha – mucous

Karma – action in the manifest or unmanifest dimension; law of cause and effect; deep impressions in life which make us think, feel and act in particular ways

Karma Yoga – immunity from the cause and effect of actions; harmony in action

Karma Sannyasa – path of the householders who, in harmony with their normal lifestyle, follow sadhana and cultivate the qualities of intense awareness and non attachment

Karmendriyas – the five organs of action: hands, feet, tongue, excretory and reproductive organs

Kaya kalpa – rejuvenation of the physical body

Khechari mudra – lightly placing the underside of the tip of the tongue against the upper palate

Kham Brahman – space is Brahman

Kirtan – mantras which are sung to music

Kosha – a form; a sheath; a body; a dimension; the five kosha are: annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, anandamaya

Kri – to perform

Kriya – action, motion

Kriya Yoga – sequence of techniques involving the movement of prana and consciousness leading to dhyana

Krodha – anger

Kundalini – latent energy in mooladhara chakra; evolutionary force

Kundalini Yoga – practices for the awakening of kundalini

Kunjil – a practice of dhauti which removes excess mucus by voluntarily vomiting after taking warm salty water

Laghoo – light; a short form of shankaprakshalana

Lam – bija mantra for mooladhara chakra

Laya Yoga – meditation practice involving dissolving different stages of consciousness without creating imbalance

Lobha – greed

Lokas – 22nd to 28th levels of evolution; dimensions where consciousness is active and energy is passive: bhuh, bhuvah, swah, mahah, janah, tapah, and satya

Mada – ego

Maha akasha – great space; preparatory to Laya Yoga; observation of consciousness related with manipura chakra which is bright like the middle of the sun

Mahah loka – dimension of consciousness related to anahata chakra and the element of air

Maha prana – space, cosmic energy

Mahat – unmanifest mind; manas, buddhi, chitta, ahamkara

Maithuna – the sexual instinct; tantric union

Mala – a garland usually composed of 108 beads; an aid to meditation practise

Manas – aspect of manifest mind involved in experiences of sensory perception and thought/counter thought

Mandala – diagram within a circumference symbolizing the deeper aspects of man's psyche; complex geometrical symbol merging macrocosmic and microcosmic events

Manipura chakra – concentration point is situated behind the navel in the spine; center for will power and energy

Manomaya kosha – the dimension of mind

Mantra – subtle sound vibrations which liberate mental forces

Mantra Yoga – the science of understanding the effect of sound vibrations as they influence the human personality

Matsarya – negative tamasic possessiveness, jealousy, malice

Maya – ignorance of reality; illusion or creative power

Moha – attachment

Moksha – freedom and liberation

Mooladhara chakra – basic pranic and psychic center in the human evolutionary scale, concentration point is at the perineum in males, the cervix in females; seat of kundalini

Moolbandha – concentration and contraction at mooladhara

Mouna – silence; measured silence

Mudha – the dormant or confined, bound state of mind

Mudra – psycho-neural attitude which redirects pranic energy

Muhurta – time

Nadi – channel or flow; passage through which energy and/or consciousness flows; river

Nadi shodhana – alternate nostril breathing; a practice to purify the nadis; a balancing pranayama

Nama smarana – remembrance of the divine name

Narakas – 1st to 7th levels of evolution which are dormant and crude, where consciousness is in the seed form

Nasikagra drishti – gazing at the nose tip, a mudra which stimulates mooladhara

Nauli – practice beneficial for the abdominal area and the activation of pranic flows; relates directly to manipura

Neti – practice which cleanses the sinuses; relates to ajna chakra

Niranjan – immaculate, without stain

Nidra – isolation from the senses and the mind; sleep

Nirbija samadhi – samadhi without seed

Nirodhah – controlling, blocking, managing

Nirvana – liberated state

Nirvikalpa samadhi – samadhi without illusion, or alternative

Nishkama seva – selfless service

Nivritti – path to liberation; retirement, cessation, return

Niyama – codes of conduct to imbibe in life: saucha, santosha, tapah, swadhyaya, ishwara pranidhana; natural states of the transformed personality

Nyasa – proper use of cosmic strength within

Om – universal mantra; source of all other mantras; bija mantra for ajna chakra; sound symbol of Brahman

Pancha – five

Panchagni – sadhana of the five fires

Pancha vyoma dharana – meditations on five spaces of consciousness; also called vyoma panchaka dharana

Paramahansa – sannyasins who are able to discriminate between unreality and reality

Param akasha – preparatory to Laya Yoga, observation of deep space and starlight in swadhisthana

Patalas – 8th to 14th levels of evolution which are an instinctive manifestation of individuality in life

Pawanmuktasana – a series of asana to harmonize the body and prana

Pingala – nadi connected with the right nostril conducting active vital energy; the solar aspect; the dynamic aspect

Pitta – connected with water and fire; digestive enzymes

Poorna Sannyasa – complete sannyasa; the traditional form of sannyasa involving internal and external renunciation and total dedication to guru

Poornata – completeness

Pramana – means of right knowledge; one of the five vrittis

Prana – force which governs the manifest dimension; energy; vital force of life which exists in everything

Prana utthana – activation of pranic energy

Prana vayu – upward flowing prana between manipura and vishuddhi

Pranamaya kosha – the dimension of energy

Pranayama – practices involving control of inhalation, exhalation and breath retention; techniques for expanding pranic energy

Prapti – attainment

Pratyahara – feeding and then withdrawing the senses; observing, adjusting and accepting inner forces to attain inner harmony

Pravritti – path of involvement in the world where evolution follows its natural pattern; continued effort in behaviour

Prithvi – earth

Raga – attraction; something which brings attachment

Rahita – without

Raja Yoga – eightfold path classified by Sage Patanjali: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi

Rajas – creative force on the positive side; self-oriented, selfish activity on the negative side

Ram – bija mantra for manipura chakra

Ramayana – the epic story of the life of Sri Rama

Rishi sannyasa – sannyasins with strong spiritual yogic aims living as a family unit and pursuing their spiritual paths

Ritam – evolving reality; settled order; truth

Rupa – form

Sabija samadhi – samadhi with seed

Sadhak – one who tries to become perfect; spiritual aspirant established in sadhana

Sadhana – regular practice; where the entire life process becomes part of an effort to achieve higher realization; practice combined with regularity, continuity, conviction and faith

Sahajoli mudra – practice involving physical contraction of muscles around the urethra and directing the energy upward; a technique for raising energy

Sahasrara chakra – concentration point is at the crown of the head; represents the permanent state, the pure, unchanging state of energy and consciousness; state of inner effulgence or enlightenment; threshold into a new dimension

Sakshi – the witness, the seer

Sam or **San** – prefix meaning total, harmonious

Samadhi – realization of union; dissolving or merging with divine consciousness, and the application of that realization

Samana vayu – the energy between prana and apana vayu

Samarpan – the ability to surrender to the divine will; living in the present; dedication

Samskara – unconscious memories which set up impulses and trains of thought; education; impressions in the mind leading to creative performance

Sankalpa – resolve; determination or conviction

Sankhya – one of the six classical Indian philosophies

Sannyasa – inner harmony which expresses itself externally; proper use of cosmic strength; renunciation, dedication

Sannyasin – one who is dedicated to spiritual knowledge

Sanskrit – ancient language from which many modern languages are derived; the language related to mantras

Santosh – contentment; acceptance of life

Sanyama – flow of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana; restraint

Satsang – being in the company or field of truth

Sattwa – guna experienced when tamas and rajas are balanced; the purity and harmony which is of the inner self

Satya – establishing oneself in truth

Satya loka – dimension of consciousness related to sahasrara; the final state of consciousness which does not go through any changes; the fixed permanent eternal reality

Saucha – experiencing the inner purity; cleanliness

Savikalpa samadhi – samadhi combined with sense, verbal and true knowledge

Sayuja – total identification with the object of contemplation; fusion with the object of contemplation; union

Seva – selfless service; devotion

Shakti – energy

Shakti bandhas – a series of asana to release blocked energy

Shambhavi mudra – focusing the open or closed eyes on the eyebrow center

Shankaprasakhalana – one of the practices of dhauti; removes toxins and mucus from the digestive tract

Shanti mantras – mantras for invoking peace

Sharira – body

Shasan – to govern, to rule

Shatkarma or **Shatkriya** – six cleansing techniques of Hatha Yoga: neti, dhauti, nauli, basti, trataka, kapalabhati

Shishya – one with the urge to realize the inner self and the ability to follow the guidelines given by the guru and surrender the ego

Shivalingam – symbol of Shiva, or consciousness

Shoonya or **Shoonyata** – nothingness, the void

Shram – effort in work, penance, austerity

Shuddha – pure

Siddha – master; one who has perfected

Siddhi – power; perfection; the ability to flow with life

Smriti – memory; one of the five vrittis

Sneha – affection for all; attachment

Spandan – vibration

Sukha – pleasure

Suryabheda – a vitalizing pranayama

Sushumna – nadi activated through the balance between ida and pingala nadis; transcendence

Sutra – verse; thread

Swa – self

Swadhisthana chakra – concentration point at the base of the spinal column; ‘one’s own abode’; center of the unconscious

Swadhyaya – the study of one’s personal nature; self analysis

Swah Loka – dimension of consciousness related to manipura chakra and the fire element

Swami – master of the self

Swapna – dream state, subconscious

Swara – subtle flows of energy related to breath and the gunas

Swarupa – one’s own form

Tadasana – an asana which stretches the spine; the tree pose

Tamas – stability, attainment on the positive side; stagnation, fear of change on the negative side

Tantra – ancient universal science, philosophy and culture which deals with the transcendence of human nature; expansion of mind and liberation of energy

Tapah Loka – dimension of consciousness related to ajna chakra

Tapas – a process of transcendence through continued effort, experiencing the force of evolution in life; heat; austerity

Tattwa – elements: prithvi, jal, agni, vayu, akasha

Tattwa akasha – practice of experiencing the different bodies of the tattwas in order to know their nature and function

Tejas – fire; tip of the flame; brilliance; energy

Thum – mantra governing the lunar force

Tiryaka tadasana – an asana which flexes the spine

Tra – rescue; save; protect; see trayati

Trataka – gazing at a fixed point

Trayambakeshwar – one of the twelve jyotir linga

Trayati – liberates

Turiya – superconsciousness

Tyaga – renunciation, letting go of an attachment

Tyaga Jayanti – the anniversary of renunciation

Uddiyana bandha – pulling the abdominal organs up and in, creating a natural upward flow of energy

Ujjayi pranayama – slightly contracting the glottis of the throat so the breath makes a light snoring sound; a deep relaxing breath used often in meditation practices

Vairagya – not being attached to the desires and personal cravings nor influenced by raga; being non-attached

Vajroli mudra – involves physical contraction of the muscles surrounding the urethra causing pranic energy to rise

Vam – bija mantra for swadhisthana chakra

Vata – related to air and ether; wind

Vayu – air; prana or energy flow as in pancha vayu: prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana

Vedas – the oldest scriptures expressing dharma

Vidya – wisdom

Vijnana – absolute knowledge; intuitive ability

Vijnanamaya kosha – the dimension of inner wisdom

Vikalpa – one of the five vrittis; doubt; an alternative; error

Vikshipta – the dissipated or oscillating state of mind

Viparyaya – wrong knowledge; one of the five vrittis

Vipareeta karani mudra – inverted psychic attitude; the half shoulder stand with greater intensity of concentration

Vishuddhi chakra – the concentration point is in the spine behind the thyroid gland; center for pure expression; the doorway between the manifest reality beginning with akasha tattwa and the transcendental reality of the higher chakras in Laya Yoga

Viveka – discrimination, right knowledge or understanding

Vrittis – fluctuations, modifications, forces which dominate the mind at one given moment

Vyoma – space

Yam – bija mantra for anahata chakra

Yama – five codes of conduct or disciplines to imbibe in life: ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha; natural states of the transformed human personality

Yan from **Yana** – the subtle vehicle

Yantra – simple or complex geometric symbols which aid in liberating the subtle vehicle of consciousness

Yoga – attaining harmony, union

Yoga nidra – where one is neither awake nor in deep sleep

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Notes

Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.



SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

“The ability to be evolved in life involves being able to flow from one stage to the next. In this process we encounter different dimensions of consciousness and energy. The senses remain the same but the vision changes and the quality of the senses also changes.”

“If yoga means unity, then it cannot be a self-centred practice. In samadhi it is not only the realization of God which is important, but also the application of that realization externally.”

The second volume of *Yoga Sadhana Panorama* presents discourses, satsangs and meditation practices given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati during his visit to Europe in 1994. The teachings offered are designed to give new insights into the experiences one gains during the course of yoga sadhana.

A wide range of topics includes mind management, yoga psychology, self evolution, and the application of yogic knowledge. The advanced meditation practice of Laya (dissolution) is discussed at length and class transcriptions are included.



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